Where Does Courage Come From
By Maureen (Woods) Williamson

Question for you, the reader, where does courage come from? Have you ever considered this question? I do not have scientific proof, but as an example of my own life, I think courage comes from adversity.

I am taking you back to my childhood. Come along for the ride.

I was born in deepest, darkest Africa to parents who were adventurous. I was the second child, of my dad who came from Dutch descent, and my mother was from Irish descent. Born and raised in what was then known as Rhodesia, now known as Zimbabwe.

Rhodesia was then also known as the Pearl of Africa, mostly Europeans came in search of gold and precious stones like diamonds.

I was born into the family, de Beer. They are probably the most wealthy family in Southern Africa. The ‘de Beer’s’ were the Diamond family, and when I grew up I had such fun with the name ‘de Beer’ as we were ‘not’ that de Beer family.

However, we were not poor by any means, we had servants and we lived a very desirable lifestyle with a beautiful garden, lovely house, and many social friends that visited the family.

But, I digress. Lets go back to my early days. I was a sick child, I had a continuation of lung problems and grew weaker with every new complication. I had to miss a year of school due to sickness.

I wore calipers on my skinny legs because of weakness. I had a nurse take care of me and doctors always around me, my parents were told that it’s not very likely that I would live beyond the
age of seven. But if I did reach seven years old, and that was very questionable, I could recover from all these childhood health problems.

I remember my Dad looking at me in the bed, shaking his head in sadness and saying, I don’t think Maureen is going to live. I remember saying to him, ‘yes, I am going to live, and I am going to make a difference in this world one day.’ I was very determined to live, and that is exactly what did happen.

It was almost to the day of my seventh birthday; I rose up, with a fighting spirit, and a determination such as most people had not seen before. My calipers were no longer necessary and I grew tall, taller than my parents, I was from that point, and even today, incredibly fearless. Watch out ‘world,’ don’t get in my way!

I decided I wanted to be a model, so anything to please, Maureen. I was trained in modeling, and by the age of eight, I was earning a living as a child model. My mother saw the amazing change in me and I recall her saying, ‘you will walk where angels fear to tread, Maureen.’

I determined too, that I did not want to have children, because I am going to be a world changer and world changers don’t have kids, startling thoughts for an eight-year-old.

I believe that is exactly what happened, I found Jesus Christ as the age of thirty-three, and I began changing the world one person at a time.

Rhodesia was an English Colony, and that meant royalty would visit from time to time. Queen Elizabeth, and the Queen Mother, came to visit our city, Bulawayo. The Queen’s entourage determined they would visit our school, which was a highly respected school. The headmaster asked the students at assembly one morning if there was anybody who could dance, or sing, and would like to do so for the Queen of England.

My arm shot up and I said, ‘I will dance for the Queen.’ Everybody laughed and giggled, because most knew that I could not dance, not professionally that is, but the students and school staff all knew that I was a show off, and clearly I could do whatever I wanted to, and challenge is what Maureen thrived on.

The day of the visit came and the Queen and Queen Mother arrived in style with all the pomp and ceremony expected of royalty. The entire school was in the assembly hall waiting and the hall was filled to capacity, except for the few front rows that were reserved for our special guests.

The show began with an assortment of speeches from local authorities, which in my mind, was such a waste of time. Meanwhile I was waiting backstage. Finally, some of our school’s best talents performed before the Queen.

Then it was my turn. I had the signal. My cue came and in my excitement, I burst onto the stage. I was madly excited, and I was wearing a leotard and bright red tunic. I had taps on my red tap shoes, and there was nothing to stop me now. I was ready to go.

My instruction to listen for the cue when the music ended, and to perform a polite courtesy and leave the stage, seemed a distant, insignificant event to me.

The piano was playing, ‘Four Leaf Clover,’ and it was my choice. My legs began to move and my feet began to tap, and there with a huge smile on my face. My skinny legs were moving faster than the speed of sound and my blond hair was flying wildly. There was much clapping from the school children and I noticed that the Queen was highly amused too.

The music stopped, and that was my cue to exit, but I just stayed right there, tapping, having the time of my life. There didn’t seem to be any good reason to exit at this point. This caused a roar of laughter as I continued to dance on without the music. Eventually one of the teachers moved onto the stage and caught me by my arm. He pulled me in the direction of the stage exit. I stayed mostly
facing the audience, waving and loving the applause. I hated to say goodbye to my most enthusiastic audience.

It was then that I knew for certain that I could grow to be a world-changer. If sickness did not take my life, then what was I ever going to be afraid of?

A star was born that day!