




# Flight Path


A biography of Frank Barker Jr.






For the last three decades, I have considered Frank Barker one of the outstanding pastors in America. His ministry at Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, a church he founded, has reached out to every part of the world. I highly recommend this book to young pastors because it will enrich their ministry. They will discover the central ingredients of the Christian life and how to have a missions program that will be a blessing to the entire world. I thank God for Frank Barker.

**The Late Bill Bright, Founder,  
Campus Crusade for Christ**




Most biographies should be burned! That is because most biographies exalt the greatness of a servant and nobody should worship at the altar of anybody except God. This is a biography you should keep and one you should read and re-read. It tells me about a servant, Frank Barker, but it points to Christ on every page. As I've read this book, I've laughed and I've cried and I've rejoiced in its honesty and reality but, far more than that, I've seen Christ and what He will do through His servants who will do it His way. Read this book! You'll be so glad you did.



**Steve Brown,  
Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando, Florida**

The story of Frank Barker is an amazing account of how God uses the faithful and the humble. In a marvelous way Christ sought him, saved him, and made him an effective instrument for the building up of the church. What a remarkable and encouraging legacy! May God bless this book to the edification of many readers. "Be steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; you know that your labor in Him is not in vain" (1 Cor. 15:58).

**John MacArthur, Senior Pastor,  
Grace Community Church, Los Angeles, California**



The book kept me spellbound! The only time I have to read is at bedtime and I couldn't wait for that time to come, and then I couldn't quit reading! Frank's ministry parallels ours so much. I appreciate the opportunity to read the manuscript.

**Anne Kennedy (Mrs. D. James Kennedy)**

Janie Buck having applied her skills to share the testimony of my good friend and home pastor, Frank Barker, should result in thousands being blessed in a phenomenal way. At long last the story of this humble man who built one of the leading churches in this country is being told. Frank's simple life of faith in a supernatural God who delights in doing the impossible when we trust Him should warm your heart, and hopefully be an example to many. I was spiritually refreshed as I relived some of the experiences related in this wonderful book.

**Bailey Marks, Senior Vice President,  
Campus Crusade for Christ**

What an extraordinary privilege to recommend this book on one of the great pastors that our Lord has provided for His church, Dr. Frank Barker. Frank has been my mentor, my friend, and now my colleague as he serves as Pastor Emeritus of Briarwood where I have had the privilege to follow him into the role of Senior Pastor. At that church the Lord used him to establish and grow with the mission to "reach Birmingham to reach the world for Christ." This book will give you insights on how the extraordinary power of God works through a man who has an extraordinary commitment to serve His God.

**Harry Reeder, Senior Pastor,  
Briarwood Presbyterian Church, Birmingham,  
Alabama**



One of the great American pastors of the twentieth century, Dr. Frank Barker's dramatic conversion and selfless service translated into a remarkable ministry that touched thousands of lives and made a major contribution to international missions. If I were to select a model pastor, Frank Barker would be that person. I am thrilled that his life story is now available so that more people can become acquainted with this gifted man of God and the global vision that marked his ministry at Briarwood Presbyterian Church.

**Luder G. Whitlock, Jr., Excelsis**

This is the page-turning story of one of the most remarkable ministers of the Gospel I have ever known. When I think of Frank Barker the words that come first to mind are faithfulness and humility. His love for God's Word and his desire to share the Gospel with everyone everywhere are the consuming passions of his life. I wish that every young minister could spend a year under the tutelage of Frank Barker. A great read about a mighty man of God!

**Timothy George**  
**Dean, Beeson Divinity School of Samford**  
**University, Birmingham, Alabama**

Early in my ministry, I spent several days with Frank, following him around and watching everything he did to learn all I could from him. Besides his commitment to prayer and his heart for evangelism, the other obvious fact about Frank's life and ministry was how hard he worked daily from early until late. The Lord greatly blessed Frank's diligence as well as his faithfulness.

**Robert C. Cannada, Jr.**  
**President, Reformed Theological Seminary**



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A biography of Frank Barker Jr.



Janie Buck and Mary Lou Davis

**CHRISTIAN FOCUS**





## About the Authors

**Janie Buck**, wife and mother of two children and six grandchildren, is a Bible teacher and speaker. She and husband Dr. William P. Buck worked part time with Campus Crusade for Christ for 30 years. They are teachers and mentors in Briarwood Presbyterian Church. Together they teach seminars and lead retreats. Janie has authored four other books and numerous articles. She explores matters of faith on web site [www.insightstofaith.com](http://www.insightstofaith.com).

**Mary Lou Davis** is their daughter and co-author. Along with writing for youth, she is a photographer. Her photographs have appeared in major magazines. For fifteen years, she and husband Dusty were on staff with Athletes in Action, a division of Campus Crusade. Presently, they work with Campus OutReach, a college ministry of Briarwood. They have three children.

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## Foreword

I first laid eyes on Frank Barker about forty-six years ago as I was sitting in a theology classroom at Columbia Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia. He was sitting in the back row with his chair tilted back, leaning against the wall, with a look of total bewilderment on his face. I didn't know at the time that he had arrived in seminary without ever coming to know the gospel or the meaning of salvation. Seminary was hard enough for a Christian, and for one whose eyes had not yet been opened to understanding spiritual things, it must have been totally incomprehensible. I could not have imagined at that time that this befuddled young man, in just a few months, was going to grasp the gospel, be completely transformed and go on to become one of the most effective ministers in the United States. But that is getting ahead of the story.

Though Frank had grown up in a church, by the time he went to college and then into the Naval Air Corps, he had pretty well jettisoned the principles that he had learned as a child, as so many other young people have done before and since. If he had grasped the gospel in those early years the next decade of his life would have been far different. But at that point he did not have ears to hear.

The story that the author tells so engagingly about his college career and his life flying jet planes off of carriers is often hair-raising. Over and over again he was rescued from the very precipice of death by God, who was evidently preserving his life for far greater things.

This was to come to a climax when after a weekend



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*Flight Path*

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of carousing, he was driving back to Pensacola Air Base along one of those deserted Alabama highways near the Florida border, when he went to sleep while traveling sixty miles per hour. The highway turned and he didn't. He found himself flying down a dirt road with trees flashing by on either side. He finally brought the car to a halt a few inches from a large pine tree on which was a sign that was to dramatically change his life.

It was not too long after that that he left the Naval Air Corps and came to seminary in order to make his life more pleasing to God. Having, after a few months, discovered the incredible good news of the grace of Christ and the free gift of eternal life, he went on to finish his education and then was called to Birmingham, Alabama, to start a new church. From that tiny beginning, through the indefatigable labors of Frank and his wife, Barbara, over a period of about forty years, was developed one of the great mega-churches of America.

This biography written so enthrallingly by authors Janie Buck and Mary Lou Davis, is filled with innumerable lessons in life. Lessons in what it means to be a humble servant of Christ; of what it means to live a life which is unquestionably totally dedicated to God; of what it means to forge, after a rocky beginning, a marriage which is genuinely a partnership in love; of what it means to rear godly children in the midst of an incredibly busy schedule; of what it means to trust God for all your daily needs while giving away the preponderance of your income to the work of Christ; of what it means to live for the glory of Christ in the midst of the accolade of this world.

I do not believe that anyone can read this exciting and moving story of lives lived for the kingdom of God without becoming a better person through the experience.





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*Foreword*

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Fascinatingly written in the first person, it is a story reminiscent of the famous book by Catherine Marshall entitled *A Man Called Peter*. In my opinion, this, too, would make a marvelous motion picture.

**D. James Kennedy, Ph.D.**  
**Senior Minister, Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church**





## Acknowledgments

There was no way we could record all the great things God did in and through the life of Frank Barker. After two years of collecting information and praying, God led us to write as if Frank was writing his own story. Nearly everything he has said was either recorded on audio tape or written in his typed sermons. He also provided ample pages of documentation to questions about events we were unsure of. Therefore not much literary license was taken.

My daughter, Mary Lou Buck Davis, came to my aid when I was overwhelmed with the task. She worked side-by-side with me adding much needed organization to the chapters. We had help from our husbands, Dr. William Pettus Buck and James Ernest (Dusty) Davis. They were our best critics and first editors. Cliff Cox, an old friend, helped correct many of our mistakes, as did Tom Harris and Tom Bradford. We are thankful for their help. And Peggy Barker Townes gave time and added corrections. Kelly Isaacson Buck, my precious daughter-in-law, did major editing. Of course, Frank scoured the manuscript thoroughly to correct facts. All of us who worked on the manuscript benefited and learned to trust God more from the lessons He taught Frank and Barbara.