

An excerpt from:

"Courage? I Should Say So": Frances Grayson and the Flight of *The Dawn*

By Dr. Lisa M. Daly, PhD

[Frances] Grayson was heavily involved in the flight, not just financially, as herself and [Mabel] Ancker were funding the attempt, but also in the decision making as a pilot in her own right. Grayson was not used to flying aircraft as large as the Sikorsky, but is reported to have planned to do some of the flying once *The Dawn* was over the Atlantic

With the aircraft ready, Grayson and her team moved to Old Orchard, Maine, in October 1927. The team secured rooms in the Brunswick Hotel, normally only open for the summer, the hotel reopened for the aviators and their parties, and while the flying boat was moored near shore, a beachfront hangar was also secured for use. On October 13th, *Daily News New York's Picture Newspaper* contained a picture of the christening of *The Dawn*. The aircraft was christened by Dorothy Brewster, wife of Maine governor, Ralph Brewster. The following day, *The Dawn* was battered by a stormy sea, but suffered only minor cosmetic damage. Mechanics scraped some of the original paint away while making some repairs, so Grayson made a trip into Portland to buy two cans of dark blue paint. Once the aircraft was ready, Grayson put on a pair of overalls and began to paint the upper half of the aircraft herself. She was interrupted at 4pm when a delegation from the Old Orchard Board of Trade visited the hangar. According to *The New York Times* on October 15th, the delegation, headed by George F. Hichborn, found Grayson sitting on one of the wheels actively painting. She took a break to accept a bouquet of roses and to listen to

a speech made by Hichborn. Grayson said she was appreciative of the speech because Hichborn was the only one in recent days who had shown confidence in the adventure, telling her to "go to it" and stating he was certain she "would make it". Grayson explained that most people she had met with had encouraged her to give up.