

“God Became My Only Hope”

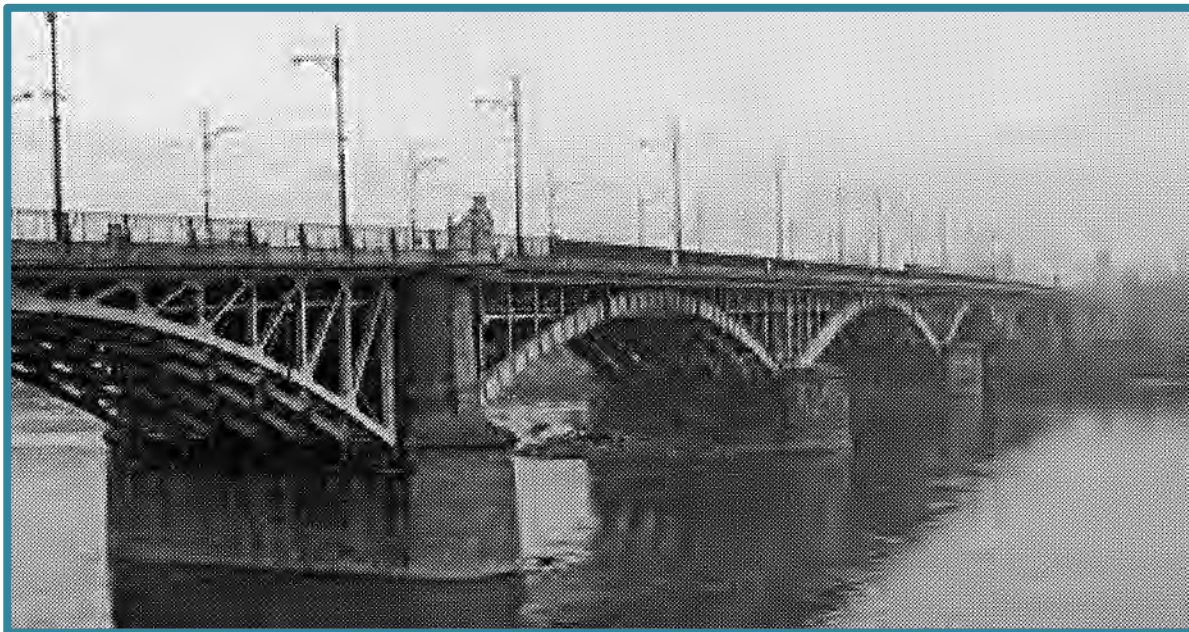
God saves the man who became her father,
and her faith saves him.



Andrew Urbanowicz: WWII veteran,
Warsaw Uprising Survivor, Volunteer



Daughter Tina Michele Weidelich:
Singer/Songwriter/Speaker/Dramatist



My father pointed to the Poniatowski bridge and told me, “Tina... if I didn’t cross that bridge you would never have been born.”

ANDREW'S & TINA'S INTERTWINED STORIES



At the age of 3, Andrew's parents divorced. His mom (centre), older sister (right) and him (left) struggled to make ends meet, living near Warsaw, Poland.



Warsaw, Poland 2010: Andrew at his old high school with his granddaughter & daughter Tina.



At 16, Andrew (top right) joined the Polish Resistance Movement and fought in the Warsaw Uprising.

Andrew:

I was born in Poland in 1927. As a teenager, I fought in the Warsaw Uprising and am a WWII veteran.

I come from a broken home - my parents divorced when I was three years old. Until the age of ten, I did not know God. Then at ten, I was placed for six years in a Roman Catholic residential school. There, I was lonely and desperate. I felt abandoned and rejected by my family. God became my only hope and I became a strong believer.

When I was 13 my father was killed as part of the mass murder in Katyn, Russia. Three years later my mother died of cancer. Out of patriotism I joined the Polish resistance movement at age 16. After only seven months, with hardly any training, I received an order to report for duty in Warsaw. The next day I had to cross the Poniatowski Bridge, which changed my destiny forever. The bridge was guarded by the Germans. Despite a very long lineup and several closings, I made it over the bridge to fight in the Warsaw Uprising.

Tina:

In 2010, my dad, daughter and I travelled to Poland to explore our heritage. At each site, my dad shared his story. He pointed to the Poniatowski bridge and told me, "Tina... if I didn't cross that bridge you would never have been born."

The bridge had only been open for 30 minutes that fateful day and after then the fighting started. If he hadn't got through in those 30 minutes, he would have ended up living in Communist Poland instead of embarking on a journey - that led him to meet his wife in Belgium, to study civil engineering in England and to immigrate to Canada in 1957, where later my sister and I were born. Crossing that bridge meant my life!

Andrew:

I crossed the bridge and ended up fighting in the Warsaw Uprising. The Uprising was only supposed to last a couple of days but it lasted nine weeks. All I was given to fight was a small lady's pistol and two bullets - a joke.

I remember I was scared - scared of the dark, bombs, sniper fire and, scared of pain - however surprisingly, I was never scared of dying. I faced my fears head on, by seeking God. I prayed my heart out to Him and once again He became my only hope. Looking back I can clearly see how God protected me. He saved my life, like when I stood guard inside a building that got hit by 3 bombs yet survived. Sadly, at the end of the Uprising, in a unit of 100, I was one of only 10 survivors. I wondered, why me?

Then at age 17, I was taken out of Poland as a prisoner of war. I went to numerous Prisoner of war camps including one in Austria. I almost lost my life, for the 6th time, when the leader of my work group refused to obey a direct order. The guards decided to execute our entire unit. I found myself one of the first three in line, staring at the firing squad. I stood tall and tried to be brave. In my anguish I cried for help to God. I heard the shots and saw the puffs of smoke from the rifles. Then I was confused. I felt no pain and saw no blood. I realized that they had shot blanks - a scare tactic. Then they locked us up in our barracks and instead waited for the transport trucks to take us to a concentration camp. Thankfully, the transports never came and the war ended days later.

"The Lord is the stronghold of my life - of whom shall I be afraid?" Psalm 27:1b



WARSZAWA



The city of Warsaw was demolished in WWII. 200,000 people died in the Warsaw uprising. Only 10% of Andrew's unit survived.



"I always knew my mom and dad loved me," Tina Michele, shown here as a baby with her parents.

Despite several divine miracles of protection, at the age of 22, I left the church. Why? I was spiritually starving and my church was unable to fill this void. I had many questions and could find no answers. I did not know that a Bible in Polish existed nor were there any Bible studies which I knew of. The people I knew had no interest in God. The longer I spent away from church the more I became cold-hearted, disappointed and disillusioned. For the next 40 years, I was an atheist. Half way into it, I reached my lowest point spiritually. Inside, I was angry, bitter and dissatisfied yet on the outside everything appeared to be fine. I decided that I needed to fix it.

From that time on I searched for truth in philosophy, psychology and literature. I never thought of God as a solution. My search was getting me nowhere. By now I was desperate – I could not fix it on my own.

Tina:

It was during this time in my dad's life, that my sister and I were born. We didn't know about God growing up. Thankfully, we always knew our parents loved us.

I only learned about my parent's stories as a teenager. My mom was born and raised in Germany. She shared with me how, after WWII at the age of 21, she tried to escape West Germany to be with her fiancée in Belgium. As she ran across the border zone, she was shot at. A bullet flew by, an inch away from her ear. She stopped dead in her tracks and a guard arrested her and took her to the border office to be sent to prison. She was desperate and feared what was next. Unexpectedly, the soldier, who was interviewing my mom, had to attend to a car passing through the gates. At that moment my mom saw her fiancée in the distance, signaling for her to escape. She seized the opportunity and ran for her life across the border, fearing she'd be shot at again. Yet this time she arrived safely into her fiancée's arms. Shortly after, they married and had a baby boy. Then tragically her husband died when she was 23 and my half brother was 11-months-old.

I remember fear gripped my soul as she shared her stories with me. She suffered. She too could have died. Unlike my dad, I feared death. I worried about what would happen once I die? What was the point of life?

Around this time, I met Carolyn for the second time in my Grade 10 band class. What struck me was how she dramatically changed from the previous year. Now she was so much more passionate, loving and had a peace about her. I yearned for that and had to find out what happened. When inquiring, she shared with me that she became a Christian and that Jesus changed her life. I didn't know who Jesus was. I went to her church and found out that Christianity is based on the Bible. In the Bible it says that Jesus is God's son and that God sent Jesus to live and die on earth so that I can have a relationship with Him. I was skeptical, so I researched Christianity and other religions for about a year. I concluded that it made more sense for me to believe in the Bible than my own philosophy in life - for I could be wrong. The Bible has withstood intensive tests and time.

However this conclusion didn't change me like it did Carolyn, until one night I had three repeating nightmares of my dad dying. No one close to me

"Dad...dad... believe in Jesus, you'll go to heaven." Tina Michele

had ever died before. In each nightmare, as I watched my dad collapse to his death, I remember screaming out to him from afar, "Dad... dad... believe in Jesus, you'll go to heaven!" Then I woke up. The third time, I knew God was speaking to me for I woke up each time at exactly 2a.m., 4a.m. and 6a.m. I realized that I never did what I was telling my dad to do. Immediately, I prayed to God professing that I believe and will follow Jesus.

That decision changed me. I knew God gave me the free gift of eternal life in Heaven - as a result of my new faith. I didn't need to fear death anymore. Fear is the opposite of faith. Day by day, I decided to tackle my worry gene with God's help. I realized 'if you trust, you do not worry. If you worry, you do not trust.' So every time I worried, I meditated on Proverbs 3:5-6 "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight." I gave each worry to God and trusted Him with it.

Since then, I've been through some very challenging times, like the death of my mom, close friends and family members, personal relationship struggles and infertility. It's a blessing to see how I've changed over the years. Now trusting God is more often my automatic default, as I've seen how God provided and took care of me.

Andrew:

I could see Tina changed and it was authentic. I was 60, when she became a Christian. I prayed "God if you can change my life like Tina's - I will follow you!" She shared with me her story of how she became a Christian, gave me a Bible and we discussed it. For the next 4 years I read the Bible 4 times from cover to cover and attended Bible studies twice a week. I needed to solve my problem, yet I resisted surrendering my life to Christ. I was afraid God will call me to be a missionary somewhere far away. I could not abandon my children. I had a bad childhood and I would not do something like that to them. I also realized that all of my life, I thought I was in control. I wasn't. After I released control of my life and surrendered it unconditionally to Jesus, the pressure inside of me lifted and gradually I experienced joy and purpose.

It's been 26 years since I made the decision to trust in God instead of myself. Now when I look back on my life, I see God had a purpose for all of those close calls and challenging times. I can see Him protecting me and drawing me close to Him. This inspired my book "God's Leading in my Life" (available online at: www.tinamichele.com) which shows how God, throughout my life, was actively working even though I didn't realize it at the time. Often, I misread events. I thought I was cursed, but now I realize I was blessed. 15 times I was miraculously delivered from life and death situations. I've also seen how God brought four of my family members into a relationship with Him. I want to encourage people to "look deeply, look back, trust and believe."

Note: God willingly, this summer at age 90, I will go on my fifth short-term volunteer trip to Poland with International Messengers. It's my hope to help teach English, the Bible and to share my story on how God became my only hope and how God protected me and never abandoned me.

WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

Visit www.tinamichele.com

▶ Watch Andrew & Tina's interview on 100 Huntley Street

▶ Read Andrew's three, free online books:

- **God's Leading in my Life**
(The days of resistance, battle and defeat)
- **Prowadzony przez Boga (available in Polish)**
- **My Spiritual Journey**
(Nazi Occupation and Aftermath of WWII)

Tina Michele and Andrew are available for speaking opportunities.



By Andrew Urbanowicz



By Andrew Urbanowicz



Andrew and Tina interviewed on TV's 100 Huntley Street.

"If you trust, you do not worry. If you worry, you do not trust."