



A Vision Fulfilled: Patti Penny's Journey

Michael Pulley

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A Vision Fulfilled is the intriguing biography of a successful midcentury woman entrepreneur.

Michael Pulley's *A Vision Fulfilled* is a compelling biography of entrepreneur Patti Penny.

Penny herself supplies the information and charming tone that characterizes much of the book. In casual, conversational terms, she recalls having demonstrated her independence and entrepreneurship skills from an early age. She rode her tricycle around town alone when she was small, and raised funds for a variety of causes in high school. Her penchant for going her own way accompanied her into adulthood, and ultimately enabled her to launch and grow Penmac Staffing from a tiny company with one client to a multistate corporation.

The book's early chapters focus on Penny's childhood and adolescence in 1940s and 1950s Missouri, presenting it as a time of great contrasts. Penny saw the aftereffects of World War II and the Great Depression, but also witnessed as cultural optimism increased in her teenage years. That zestful period is detailed in humorous, vital terms, as with an anecdote about Penny learning to dance with a leg cast.

Penny's family relationships influence the whole of the narrative. Some of her connections were strong, as with her grandmother, but others were bad, including with her mother. Both women played significant roles in shaping her, albeit in different ways. Her grandmother's story casts a bittersweet shadow on the book even after her passing.

Penny was driven by goals that seemed impossible, such as to raise five thousand dollars for a senior trip to Miami. She moved to Springfield after graduation, following an internal sense of ambition. She experienced a whirlwind courtship with her eventual husband, whose funny, sweet proposal to her adds a touch of romance to the book.

Accounts of economic struggles in Penny's early adulthood lead into encouragements that she start her own business, following years of part- and full-time jobs that helped her to hone her work ethic. The book's coverage of Penny building her business is itself hurried, though. The details and strong descriptions used to enliven her previous adventures are missing in the book's later sections, which are devoted to quick summaries of events, from Penny's initial vision for her business, to its establishment as a multistate corporation, and her eventual retirement. These later sections also feature abrupt conclusions that are not in keeping with the rest of the book.

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CAROLINA CIUCCI (May 25, 2021)

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