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Women's Studies

The Secret to Their Success: How 33 Women Made Their Dreams Come True
Coastal Carolina Press
978-1-928556-20-6

Finding comfort in one's own skin can be divine beyond words. Here are two oversized books filled with women's stories and interviews, all of who have a geographic connection to North Carolina and share their insight on knowing and loving themselves, and the fulfilling careers that confirm this. Fritzi Huber, in The Long Way Around, tells about her career as a hand papermaker and painter: "…through this work I have tapped more and more into my own knowing. Being in touch with one's knowing is extremely powerful…."

A powerful theme of spirituality and living one's passion runs throughout these books. Each interview and essay reveals another variety of the women's shared goals of personal clarity and development. Although what is written shows many multifaceted lives, spirals of change propel each woman to self-discovery. This surge of continuity flows throughout both books. The preface in The Secret to Their Success, describes it this way, "[we] want to discover the 21st century North Carolina woman….She is from everywhere, and her story is every woman's story."

The Carolina Women's Press (an imprint of Coastal Carolina Press) is a new nonprofit organization devoted to the sharing of life experiences, offering advice, and creating communities of support for all women everywhere. These two books do just that by acting as guides to others.

Maya Angelou is featured in The Long Way Around. Her interview is crisp, specific, and filled with wisdom. As always, her many talents shine through this little window on her life. All these women speak candidly about their successes and failures, yet show how they've flourished in different career roles such as artist, spirit coach, athletic director, producer, Shamanic practitioner, quilter, teacher, mother, volunteer, and more. Kim Crenshaw, a photographer, advises others that "if you have dreams, you have to have the faith of knowing that it will be there and then putting the action behind it to make it happen."

A page of bio and photo follows each featured selection. The interviews often create such curiosity about the subject that it takes restraint to not quickly flip to the image of the

extraordinary woman being read about. The flow of the printed stories and interviews, however, keep the focus on the rhythm of one person's lifestory rolling to the next. These women's dreams have taken the shape of physical realities.

Some stepping stones of progressive awareness culled from this two-volume set might include "Tune into Spirit"; "Stay Focused and Challenged"; "Remain Smart and Clear"; "Live Your Passion"; and "Stay Green." "Stay Green" means to keep learning as Billie Granger explains after being asked why she went back to school at the age of seventy-five: "Because I want to stay green," she said, "and the only way to stay green is to keep learning. When you are green, you are living, but when you stop learning, you begin to turn brown. You know what happens to the leaves on a tree when they start turning brown. Soon they die."

The reading selections are appealing in several ways. Anyone can pick up either of these wide, lap-reading books and be significantly nourished by one story or simply peruse casually through the amazing bios. They don't require great dedications of time and perseverance. These essays and interviews are perfect companions to a hot cup of tea and a timeout. Reading another woman's tale of triumph is always energizing. These pages do not include psychological guilt-trip therapy or how-tos; instead, it's all about inspiration and support. The stories celebrate the Self with a pervading sense of spirit that speaks with a still, small voice. The effect of this message is far-reaching and encouraging to any person's circumstances.

The fact that all these real-life women managed—perhaps one step at a time—to arrive at the same point of perception and personal success is convincing. "[I]t took me all those years to accept that this is what I loved. And it was Ok to be good at it. And…I could pursue it, and I did," said Maudy Benz, a writer and teacher. Suddenly, the reader gets it. All people share this secret. The common urge for completion in the sense of oneself, of being the only one, of being the definition of unique. This wave of knowingness gradually lifts the reader to see that his or her own lesson and path is now. These books say, take the dive.

Aimé Merizon