



MY LIFE HISTORY

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Birth to age 5

- Born in New York City in 1954
- Raised by my grandmother and grand aunt
- Spanish was my cradle language
- Lived in a tenement apartment building with a stoop
- Would sit on the fire escape during the summer with my grandmother to cool off
- My grand aunt would correct my manners and speech (she was a teacher)
- Would get bundled up in a snowsuit during the winter and inevitable have to go the bathroom immediately after it was done.
- Remember getting a polio shot and having the mumps
- Began to take piano lessons.

Age 6 to 10

- Went to kindergarten not knowing one word of English.
- Went to Catholic school where the nuns wore habits that covered every inch of them except their faces.
- Learned to hate peanut butter as a result of having a nun force me to eat a PB&J sandwich, which I promptly threw up.
- Received my first communion in a white dress and white Mary Jane patent leather shoes.
- Was accepted as a student by a piano teacher whose students usually went to Julliard.
- My mom married when I was eight. I finally got a daddy and moved to California.
- Went to public school for the first and only time in my life. Was standing in line in the cafeteria when the announcement was made that President Kennedy had been shot.
- My dad's mom was unhappy that he married a woman with a child and took it out on me. My mom sent me back to New York to live with my grandmother. I was convinced I had done something wrong and that no one wanted me.
- Went back to my mom a year later when my sister was born. I took care of her, she was mine to love.
- My brother and middle sister were born in the three subsequent years.

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*The highest reward for
a person's toil is not
what they get for it, but
what they become by it.*
-John Riskin

Age 11 to 15

- Met my best friend when I was twelve. We were both misfits. I was a teacher in the school daughter and her mom was widowed and was going to school at Berkley.
- Refused to take any more piano lessons. I had left a teacher that I loved and who was talented to take lessons from a small town teacher who did not seem interested.
- Graduated from 8th grade with honors and went to the Catholic girls high school.
- Wrecked my parents' car when some friends and I took it out for a joy ride. My dad got so angry that he threw me out of the house. I went to stay with Ellen.
- My grandmother was diagnosed with cancer while I was staying at Ellen's. I did not see her before she died because no one could be bothered to pick me up at Ellen's to take me to the hospital far away.
- To earn money for clothes and stuff, I cut fruit during the summer and had a baby-sitting business. I was very popular with parents. Even had a family who would pay my way to Berkley to baby-sit their twins.
- Became one of the best dancers in town. Went to all the dances and had a great time. Met my first serious boyfriend who was the brother of one of my best dance partners.
- Did very well in school but did get a D on a biology test once.
- Had a great time in high school.
- My baby sister was born. My mom told me she was mine to care for as that is how I would learn to care for my own children.

Age 16 to 20

- Danced, partied, worked and studied my way through high school.
- Met my first true love. He was an honors student with very high ambitions. He loved me but I did not fit his image and his plans for his future. Therefore, we broke up in my junior year.
- Graduated with honors.
- Got my first real job as a waitress at Denny's. Did very well, the customers thought I was great.
- Was accepted at UCLA, UC Berkley and San Francisco State. There was no money so I went to the local JC.
- Had my first love appear back in my life only to spend a weekend together that ended with him telling me he was going to marry someone else that suited his life and needs.

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*It's not WHAT you do
for a living that will make you
happy. It's WHO you get
to be while you're doing it.*
-Laura Berman Fortgang

- Met my first husband. We did not marry until four years later.
- Graduated from JC and moved to Long Beach to go the CSULB. Continued a long distance relationship with Joe.
- Went to work at Denny's in downtown Long Beach. Met a group of businessmen (CPAs) who were to have a tremendous impact on my life.
- Worked, went to school, was with Joe and was happy.

Age 21 to 25

- Graduated from college with a BS in accounting. Went to work for company in Long Beach.
- Worked with an outstanding group of individuals. They were teachers and mentors not just professionally but personally.
- Met John at work. He became a friend and colleague. A group of us went out together once a week after work.
- I grew professionally and was respected for my hard work, smarts and client service.
- Got married, only because Joe refused to move to Long Beach and live with me without being married.
- We were happy for a time until I figured out that he wanted me to take care of him the way his mom took care of his dad. His mom was a biologist who quit her job to take care of her Sicilian husband and children.

Age 26 to 30

- Separated in 1980.
- John and I started dating in late 1981 and moved in together. I was convinced I had found my partner and my soul mate.
- Got married in 1982.
- Son was born in 1984.
- We were crazy in love but our relationship was stormy. We spent almost all of our time together. Went away for weekends all the time.
- John started his business. He was happy except for the situation with his kids.
- John threw me a surprise 30th birthday party. At the last minute, he panicked and told me about the party. I was upset and disappointed. Tried not to show it but I am sure he knew.

Age 31 to 35

- Life went merrily along.
- In 1988, I left my firm and went to work for Bristol Park Medical Group. Work once again became fun. I worked all the time.

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- I wanted to have another child. John told me to wait until his business was better and we could buy a house. I agreed.
- Life went merrily along – mostly. We started to see the first of 3 marriage counselors.

Age 36 to 40

- I started pressing for another child. John said no and said he did not want any more children. He broke what was to be the first of many promises.
- We bought our first home with John's profit from all his hard work with his business.
- John's niece came to live with us. She became the daughter I would never have.
- Son became the center of our world and the tool by which we negotiated our relationship.
- Son was wonderful; work was great, married life was often strained. Our counseling continued and then it stopped.

Age 40 to 45

- Son continued to grow into a wonderful boy and adolescent. All was right with him.
- In 1996, John's business began to fail. He came to me one day and told me to take over all the bills or lose the house. No discussion, no nothing.
- My career took off. I had a substantial financial windfall.
- I paid off all of our debts and bought a new home in Mission Viejo.
- John's resentment of my success became so that it dominated everything aspect of our life. Son often says that his dad and I divorced when we moved in the Mission Viejo house.
- My desire to mask my pain with the outwardly trappings of success became my focus. We lived as if he was earning money though he was not.
- My resentment started to grow.

*Why shouldn't truth be
stranger than fiction?
Fiction, after all, has to
make sense.
-Mark Twain*

Age 46 to 50

- On Valentine's Day 2000, I threw John out of the house.
- We had gone through almost everything we had except the equity in the house.
- He sold the business. We made one of several agreements about a settlement.
- We sold the house in Mission Viejo.
- I bought my dream house in OC.

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- Work became stressful as the environment changed. My last refuge was lost.
 - I was downsized in 2001.
 - Took a position in Sacramento. I thought it would mean the start of a new life.
 - I promised son and niece I would keep the house for a year. First of several bad financial decisions.
 - Worked 55 to 65 hour weeks in Sacramento. Had a very successful first year. The 2nd year, things began to change. I was not doing enough, fast enough.
 - Sold my house. Broke my heart.
 - Decided to leave the position instead of stay and fight.
 - Made my way back to OC. Went back to my accounting roots and went to work for my old CPA firm.
 - I am divorced. I have no money, many bills but I keep telling myself I have my future.
 - I am stuck and indecisive about what to do next.

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

Write your story to the best of your recall stating facts and feelings. For example: *Raised by grandmother and Aunt—Fond memories (or difficult relationships)* Whatever is true for you. Try to add very little editorializing but just enough (facts and feelings) for the reader (the coach) to follow your story.

*He who controls the past
commands the future.
He who commands
the future conquers the past.*
-George Orwell