

prompts that ask you to dig deep. May they bring forth your fullest happiness, the kind that slows time.

This book has some of my “GoGo’s” (personal “to do” lists) at the end of each chapter. The ditties are a creative expression at the end of each session. One of these days, I am hoping to have a rap session encompassing the ditties. We’ll see, but they were fun to write!



Passion Pizzazz

*Do what you love, love
what you do.*

Dressed in red and yellow polyester, my career began. I was in high school working as a STAR at McDonald's. I had the honor of starring as the Hamburglar, which was notably ironic considering my squeaky clean rap sheet. STAR at McDonald's is an acronym for Store Area Representative, which sounds stiff, but meant we got to entertain children at the endless birthday parties that came through the store. It was warming to make people happy by being exactly what they needed. Had you asked me then, I wouldn't have guessed this job would set the path for my career. I learned two valuable lessons from this experience.

One, I love serving others. Food is the ultimate source of joy. The franchisees who owned the restaurant instilled a strong work

ethic around showing up early and staying productive. Essentially, how to build the foundation of good service.

Two, I have an enduring love for consumer brands' ability to connect people to themselves and others. Brands are people and the people behind the brand are what makes strong connections.

I was hooked, so I decided to be the STAR who went for it. As full circles go, two decades later I wrote my master's thesis on McDonald's. No, it wasn't a biopic on the Hamburglar, but an exploration of my fascination by the brand's bursting emergence in China. Starting a supply chain in a new country was only the beginning of their pioneering brand's force.

A force so strong that even today, every road trip my husband and I take involves a McDonald's cheeseburger and fries. My frontline experience at McDonald's propelled me into roles with The Honey Baked Ham Company, LLC, Arby's Restaurant Group, Interface, and back home to The Honey Baked Ham Company, LLC. This lifelong career all began with passion.

“What if I fall? Oh, but my darling, what if you fly?”

— ERIC HANSON

The concept of Roots and Wings is essential for my passion's vitality. I believe if you have real roots grounded by strong values and positive people, you can soar. Roots, like a tree trunk, are filled with a quiet, deep, unyielding strength.

I grew up on the Mississippi gulf coast, where a sense of place and purpose is a part of the culture. A stunningly beautiful spot on the bayou, Ocean Springs is located between New Orleans and Mobile, off Interstate 10. It's a place where everyone knows your name and will often treat you to the best shrimp po'boy

or escargot in the world. Ocean Springs looks a bit like New Orleans' Canal Street, Laguna Beach, California, and Savannah, Georgia all wrapped into one stretch of home. Ocean Springs is where I feel most at home. Every December 26, at 4:00pm on the dot, Susan, Becky, Katy, Tina, Angie, Debbie, Patti, and fingers-crossed Maureen, show up to talk about the future, but mostly end up laughing as we reminisce about high school days. My friends and family are my roots and my wings.

MARK AND LILY

I met my husband Mark in Jackson, Mississippi through a big circle of friends. When Mark moved to Chicago, I thought I'd never see him again. Serendipitously, we reconnected in Georgia and have been together ever since—30 years to be exact. Mark is a go-getter, a great man, and a wonderful father. Lily is our teenage daughter. She's such a wise spirit and lovely person. I can't wait to see how she guides her life using some of the principles I'll be sharing.

MOM AND DAD

Mom and dad were high school sweethearts in Gulfport, Mississippi. She went to Catholic School excelling in education and he attended public school, excelling in math and high school football. Dad earned a computer science degree at Mississippi State—the first class to ever have the option of a computer science degree! He was hired to work at Boeing after college, joining a team among the first to put a man on the moon. My Mom and Dad is my roots and wings. My mom has brilliantly

bright turquoise eyes. She's smart and beautiful, a powerhouse who loves her family, her church and her friends. She taught kindergarten and third grade fueled by her own love of learning. She's an expert chef who grows her own veggies and catches crabs from the pier to make crabmeat au gratin (or the best crab cakes in the world when we're lucky). Family is the pinnacle of everything she does. My parents are at the core of who I am. They are my heart, my soul, my conscience guides. The love and guidance they've instilled within me are best told through stories.

BUZZ AND THE JELLYFISH

My dad has always been curious and funny. He adores his friends, believes anyone who likes to fish is a good person, and worships his family with genuine kindness. His love for dogs is a close second due to the uncanny connection he builds with every dog he meets. I was certain I'd eventually catch him speaking "dog."

Growing up, we adopted a lot of animals; cats, hamsters, bunnies, and chickens all had their place in our little zoo. When my brother and I were quite young, we would fish with Dad on Davis Bayou, and try to sneak home the live bait, usually a small shrimp or a worm, we were keen on admitting to our menagerie. We went so far as to name the bait until it was tragically hooked and traded for the grubby nibble of a fish. Mom mirrored our love for pets and was often the primary caretaker, or zookeeper in some instances.

While many pets lived among the Streiff household, there was no animal more beloved by Dad than Buzzsaw. Buzz, as we called him, was a bloated, gassy chocolate Lab with a jawline that went for miles. Buzz descended from Chainsaw (his dad) and

Jigsaw (his mother). Buzz's siblings were also named after saws. Their names ventured into obscure territory. Buzz lived the life. He often ran free with the family's or families' dogs who lived at the end of the park. He was clearly the self-appointed leader of his pack of rag-tag neighborhood dogs. An ass-kicker among the canines, Buzz demanded respect.

My dad was Buzz's best friend and vice versa. They would fish and drink beer, Buzz could pop a beer in his teeth and guzzle it like a drunken sailor. Dad'll tear up to this day if he talks about that dog. My parents had a long pier outside their house where they kept crab traps. Dad and his soulmate checked them everyday—the eve of May 16, 1994 was no exception. After it loomed under the surface awhile, dad pulled the trap from the murky, bayou water and emptied the contents onto the pier. All kinds of crabs and sea life were freed only to promptly scatter, sending dad chasing after them with a bucket.

Buzz could not resist the platter of sea bounty before him. He inspected each one until he came across a helpless, but unfortunately very alive, sea nettle. After a quick, approving sniff, Buzz slurped that sea nettle as if it were a prized delicacy offered up from the ocean Gods. For all his intents and purposes, it was an oyster on the half shell decorated with roe. From the periphery, dad witnessed the episode screaming tardily, "No, Buzz, don't do it!"

The jellyfish stung Buzz's throat as it went down, causing him to convulse and pass out. Dad was horrified. It had happened in the blink of an eye. He quickly responded by retrieving the jellyfish from Buzz's throat and giving him mouth to snout.

He could be heard by a neighbor crying, "Please don't die, Buzz, please don't die." When his lifesaving attempts failed to

bring Buzz back, dad had to act fast. Kay Baggett, a long time neighbor, was a marine biologist, he thought, already running to her door like a bat out of hell. Kay followed him to Buzz's limp form. She pulled out a container of milk and poured it into Buzz's exasperated throat. Suddenly, Buzz woke up, threw up, and proceeded to act as if nothing had happened (except for the celebratory, spread-eagle jump into the byyyy-you). It was rumored that later the same evening, he was seen guzzling a beer.

ACCIDENT PRONE

Blake, my sister, is ten years younger than me. She has three degrees and is practicing as a nurse, nutritionist, and general health expert. My younger brother, Mike, is just shy of two years my junior. He earns his livelihood as a bank president and spends much of his free time volunteering, but played like a wild man as a kid. Growing up, I was the people pleaser. Mike, who has never been known for his subtlety, would host tantrums in Bill's Dollar store wearing camper shorts and cowboy hats. I remember him beating his head on the floor just to get a ride on the mechanical horse outside. Naturally, we would all cave and let him ride. It's funny to think about why we say no and why we can't stand being told no.

Back then, there was no such thing as bottled water, Purell, or car seats. Lacking all the security measures we have today, it is amazing we are still alive. Mom had this dark green, brand new Monte Carlo—the cool car back then. One steamy hot summer day in 1970, we were driving to Fred's, radio blaring, windows down, me in the front seat. I was five going on ten wearing a dance recital outfit complete with a tiara, while Mike rocked his usual cowboy getup. We'd wanted gum so badly we were

incessant about it. Finally, mom handed me a piece of Juicy Fruit and second before Mike started wailing for his piece.

Briefly turning away from the wheel, mom handed him a piece of gum. The rest is blurry, probably because we were a green blur blending into the pastoral on either side. The car finally stopped spinning and swerved into a ditch where it became stuck. We were rattled, we were shaken, and the impact it made on our memories is clear even to this day.

A man stopped to help and pushed the car out of the ditch. Still shaken, we started driving home. I began to scream when I looked out the rearview mirror to see someone chasing the car. Mom looks out of the same mirror only to see Mike running behind the car with a bloody head. Later we'd learn that when the car hit the ditch, Mike had flown out the open window like a champagne cork. Mom had been in such shock she didn't realize he'd been ejected. If you've ever seen the *Chucky* movies, you can pretty much imagine the scene. Flying out of the window required him to get a few stitches, but that fireball of a stuntman was fine. I'm still convinced he's superhuman.

KIM AND THE SPIDER LADY

Growing up in Ocean Springs was idyllic. We lived on Nottingham Circle, a cul-de-sac in a subdivision where every street was named after one of King Arthur's knights. Summer days were spent exploring the woods, catching tadpoles and watching them transform into frogs, soft shell crabbing on the beach, and waterskiing in Fort Bayou.

Most of the families who lived on Nottingham Circle had kids our age. We would play kickball while the sun was setting or

descend into more deviant, teen behavior like smoking cigarettes where we wouldn't be spotted. Susan Jones, the next door-neighbor's daughter and I were like sisters. We drank Mad Dog and Miller Light ponies 'til the cows came home and later lived next door to each other while attending Mississippi State. Susan is one of those friends I might not see or talk to as much as I'd like, but when I do, we don't skip a beat.

My other Ocean Springs confidante was Kim Moreton. Kim was tall, beautiful, blonde with huge green eyes. She and I spent many days on her canoe in Fort Bayou, water skiing while dodging alligators, and exploring Horn Island collecting sand dollars between our toes and storing them in a fishing bucket to bleach when we got home (everyone was doing it). Kim and I also attended Mississippi State together as bright-eyed, bushy-tailed freshman roommates with a penchant for curiosity. Kim's grandmother, Annie, was a famous internationally known writer and photographer who once had her own float in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade.

Back in her early days, Annie was one of the first seven stewardesses for Eastern Airlines. Dubbed as the "Spider Lady," Annie became one of the world's leading authorities on spiders. She was a longtime resident of Powhatan, Virginia, where she owned and operated the world's only spider museum. After she passed, she donated the museum and its contents to the State of Virginia. Her collection of spider photographs, thought to be the most comprehensive in existence, was donated to the Smithsonian Institute, and her collection of live spiders lived at Harvard University.

When Annie would visit us in Ocean Springs in her bright yellow station wagon, she would bring some of her favorites: tarantulas, scorpions, and various other suspicious-looking spiders

in portable, see-through habitats. Freaky—but she always livened up our lives. We would scarf crabmeat au gratin (non-home-mades this time) and champagne on her kitchen counter while making cheese pepper bread for a midnight snack. I did my best to stay out of view from the spiders, in case they fancied me their midnight snack.

Kim left this earth way too early and I hold onto these memories as fuel to keep our friendship as alive as it was on those perfect evenings. She passes through my dreams in delightful ways, making me miss her dearly. Annie and Kim were such beautiful, enchanting people. Their impact on my young life lends itself deeply to my adulthood.

ROLE MODELS

My family and Ocean Springs friends are my earliest sources of inspiration, but a long list of professional connections have impacted my growth.

When it comes to unparalleled passion, Kate Atwood is a person to know. Kate and I worked together at Arby's where we became fast friends. She's a creator, entrepreneur, and community leader whose commitment to community is contagious. At 23, she founded Kate's Club, a nationally acclaimed not-for-profit based in Atlanta that supports children and teens after experiencing the death of a parent or a sibling.

Kate has received numerous accolades for her work advocating for children. Her book *A Healing Place* summarizes the driving forces behind her determinations. As passionate as she is about Kate's Club, she made the brave decision to find her replacement for board leader and chose to continue working as

a consultant. This is where I had the opportunity to meet Kate. Arby's hired her to redefine the Arby's Foundations purpose. As a result of the successful assignment, Kate was then hired to lead the Arby's Foundation with the mission to eradicate childhood hunger. Kate and the Arby's team engaged local communities and raised over \$15 million for the cause.

Kate left at the height of success at Arby's to work with Hala Modellmog, CEO of the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce. Hala was the President of Arby's Restaurant Group from 2010-2013. Kate went on to lead a movement to help Atlanta grow to become a next-generation city and a top-tier location for emerging tech and creative talent. Through Kate's vision and tenacity, she launched THEA, the first-ever city-based video streaming service that empowered Atlanta's independent content creators to be the storytellers of culture and community for the "A" around the world. Hear more about this initiative on Kate's TED talk, "It's Time We Reframe Grief for Children". She has been a guidepost in my personal trajectory through her ability to cast a bold vision and passionately turn that vision into successful programs and initiatives.

Another inspiration is Dan Hendrix, the long-standing chief executive officer at Interface, Inc. Dan has an impressive history of selflessness and when Interface's Australia plant burned to the ground, he immediately stepped in to help. Dan's primary concerns were the associates and his innumerable brave acts of kindness instilled tremendous loyalty within the Interface team. While the plant was being rebuilt, all of the associates were able to keep their jobs. During his continued tenure with Interface, he racked up 5 million Delta SkyMiles, wrote 27 million emails, and crossed the globe on 221 transcontinental flights to be with

Interface colleagues and customers. Thanks to a recommendation from Lisa Lilienthal, Interface's PR consultant, I worked directly with Dan as his CMO. I feel blessed to have seen him in action.

The following are some of Dan's best quotes from his book *Love to Lead*, that he handed out to his global teams:

"Hard Work and Luck. Most of what people call "luck" is actually the result of hard work. You can actually control your own destiny! So, have a positive outlook—people follow optimists. Take responsibility for your successes and your failures. Make your own opportunities. And take risks—lots of risks."

I follow Dan's advice and take lots of risks, but I take calculated risks. I've found it's smart to put ideas on paper and financially model the impact of the risks. When I do so, it creates "buy-in" from my cross functional partners and also illuminates what the impacts of the decision will be.

"Serve and Lead. Servant leaders put service first and leadership second. It's both a philosophy and a practice. In my experience, people who are called to serve often make the best leaders."

Serving others is what leadership is all about. It's about helping others succeed and grow.

"Follow Your Passion. Find something you love to do and show up with curiosity and openness, even when it's hard."

This philosophy is at the heartbeat of who I am. If you do what you love and love what you do, work will never seem like a drudge.

"Develop Mentors and Sponsors. Having a sponsor is different from having a mentor—and you need both. A mentor is someone who has traveled a path before you and can give you advice and insight on your own journey. A sponsor is someone who can do all that, but is also empowered to stand up for you,

to encourage others to help move you forward. A good sponsor is hard to find. Make that relationship a priority.

Amen to Dan for articulating the difference between sponsors and mentors. I treasure both, and work hard to keep the relationships thriving with both.

“Think in 3D. I gravitate towards people who are inquisitive—who look at a question or a challenge from more than one point of view and who bring me back something more than I asked for.”

Thinking in 3D is such a powerful word picture. I love these people who go above and beyond and are excited about bringing new ideas and ways of thinking to the table.

“Seek Out Smart. Know where you excel and have the confidence to complement your expertise by surrounding yourself with people who are smarter than you.”

Smart people are energizing. They are ones who like ideas at all angles and help make great things happen.

“Have Fun. Make fun a priority from the start. Be able to laugh at yourself and laugh with friends. Laughter reduces stress and lets everyone know that you have your priorities in order.”

If it’s not fun, why bother? Humor is a great way to make a tense meeting enjoyable and to break the ice.

“Make Friends at Work. Ray Anderson, Founder of Interface, always said that people who sweat together, stick together. You will spend more of your waking hours at work than you will at home, and people who work together share a common set of goals and a common destiny. That is often enough to strike lifelong friendships.”

I work hard to make friends at work. I’ve learned that when I do, I look forward to going into the office everyday. Jobs are more enjoyable and satisfaction is higher when you have friends at work.

“Find Balance. Find a way to advance your career, but also have a private life that affords you downtime and time to spend with your significant other or your family. Integrating your work life, your family life and your spiritual life is a goal, and every day, your ability to meet that goal will change based on how you prioritize your time. You can define spirituality in a way that is meaningful to you—but it’s the thing that gets you outside of yourself, allows you to slow down and focus on something bigger.”

No one ever said in their final moments that they wished they had spent more time at work. Balance has helped me put my career into perspective. Career is very important, but it’s not the only dimension of who I am.

You can also choose your boss. I have done that many times during my career. One of my closest friends, Julie Bowerman, is the current Chief Marketing & Digital Officer at Kellogg’s and prior to that, spent almost twenty years at the Coca-Cola Company. Julie is a big believer in choosing her boss. She said her favorite quote is from her father, Stan Smith who often shared the sage advice of, “Do what you love and the money will follow.”

Stan’s point was not that you will make a lot of money doing what you love (you might), but more so, when you do what you love, money is not the focus because you are so fulfilled.

GUIDE TO FINDING YOUR PASSION !



1. When have I been the happiest?

2. What about that situation was great?

3. What gets me going in the morning?

JOJO'S GOGO

- Do what you love, love what you do*
- Keep at it, show up and never give up*
- Don't be afraid to try new things and pivot as needed*
- The world is small and the world goes around and around—you never know who you'll run into years later*
- Be kind, be curious and always have fun*

LIL' DITTY

*Do what you love and love what you do.
This is so important as you choose,
When you do that, you will never lose.
You'll never be working, which is the best.
Follow your passions, I can attest.*