

# The Courage to Pursue

*Caryn Hacker-Buechel toasts women who strove to make their dreams come true and become the best vision of themselves.*

**In preparation to write this month's article celebrating** Naples' innovative women, I surrounded myself with three typically "female" items: a hot magenta, fluffy boa (the acquisition of which I have no actual memory); a faux diamond tiara (a gift from a friend for my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday) and a pale pink Cosmo (in an absolutely fabulous crystal glass). Settling in, cocooned in objects of traditional femininity, I realized that the characteristics of accomplished women have nothing to do with the energy that emanates from these items.

It was then that I noticed the word "courage" softly repeating like an old, familiar melody and playing, pianissimo, somewhere in the background of my conscious mind. To

first *hear* your dream from its inner birth and then *choose* to nurture it with honor, flexibility and truth is a brave expression of self respect. To reach for your full potential in a world that does not always cherish the intellectual growth and journey of its female inhabitants is a daring excursion, whether conscious or subconscious.

I caught up with three Neapolitans who exercised courage to pursue their dreams. International jewelry designer and entrepreneur, Amanda Jaron, commented that she knew since the age of 10 that she was "different." She had creative dreams and drive, and although her failing grades in algebra brought momentary question regarding her self-esteem, she credits her wise and understanding parents with nurturing



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and supporting her gifts. They saw her natural inner talents and allowed that expression, even if it meant that she had pink hair for a while.

Textile engineer and co-creator of the Knittingpal, Liana Buysse, was the first female admitted to the Dutch engineering school from which she would eventually graduate, paving the way for women of the future. "It was a long time ago. They had to create a special bathroom just for me," she chuckled with an air of aloofness, yet quietly aware of the long-reaching importance of such a primitive and basic task.

"It was very rare to see a woman on the stock market floor in the early '80s," remarked Peggy Mayo, retired, independent market-maker. "It was a male-dominated trading floor and it was brutal, yet I absolutely loved the fast pace and energy. I refused to fail. It was definitely a man's world and that challenged me to develop some traits that are commonly referred to as 'male.' Those traits have helped me throughout my life, whether it's been business or personal."

There are ample stories such as these in this wonderful city. Brave women, who listened to their inner voice and allowed it to guide their life's paths, are plentiful. We, as women, must embrace and celebrate their journeys, and then encourage our own. The challenge to grow to our fullest potential, unafraid of our intelligent, ambitious or creative reflection is the present focus and it will guide the future.

My now-grown son, Dylan, was a mere toddler when I was asked to leave a Midwest neighborhood playgroup because I told a friend that I needed to discuss more complex topics with the other mothers than the upcoming color of their wallpaper. This group of women actually shunned my house when Halloween rolled around, forbidding their children to partake of my tootsie rolls and gummy bears. Sisterhood kindness and understanding of our similarities and our differences needs to be driving our carpool cars and leading our gender race in the humanity game.

Yet, the young women of today have opportunities that were unavailable even a few years ago. Competitive female sports teams in high school, co-ed home economics classes and a multitude of female role models in a variety of professions previously dominated by men all assist in impacting that "gender-biased" glass ceiling. Additionally, a more youthful, positively gender-aware parental population is

offering a supportive environment for the growth and development of future female innovators.

OK...So where did I put that Cosmo? Oh, yes...ladies, let's raise our glasses to this month's featured women and to all women who have ever been treated as less than they are...or misunderstood for being exactly who they are...or denied, avoided, hated or ignored. We toast all of us who have ever been treated as though we were invisible and our gifts unacceptable...and continued on anyway. Who continued to grow and dream and flourish and offer positive energy to our families, our communities and the world. Here's to all women who pushed forward with great courage to be their best vision of themselves. Cheers!

*Caryn Hacker-Buechel, ACSW, DCSW, began writing books and articles for growing minds during her 30-year career as a psychotherapist and motivational speaker. She is the author of the children's book: A Bully Grows Up: Erik Meets the Wizard. She lives in Naples.*

