



Connie Harryman

Victorious Woman - January 2009

It was so hot and dirty in the cotton fields of the Texas panhandle that the sweat ran down and streaked the face of the tiny six-year-old girl. It was the late 1950's and Conception Huereca, the granddaughter of Mexican immigrants, and the daughter of first-generation Hispanic-American Catholic parents, dreamed of a better life. At first, "better" simply meant being clean and going to school; as her childhood progressed, and after spending up to twelve hours bent over crops in the fields for weeks at a time, and scratching her hands or chopping tall weeds in the maize fields, "better" was much more.

Even back then, Conception, nicknamed Connie, saw herself growing up to do something important. Though her father often pulled her and her siblings out of school to work in the fields, and she missed a lot of school, she wasn't discouraged. Doing mindless work gave her lots of time for daydreaming – and Connie let her imagination go wild. For a while her imagination got a boost with the help of a pair of gloves she found at the public dumping ground where her family scavenged. They were long and made of silk, and so soft to the touch. When Connie would slide them up her little arm, they extended past her elbows, and she felt regal. To eight-year-old Connie, the beautiful purple gloves were nothing short of magic. Whenever she put them on, Connie's world transformed. "I twirled and I danced," Connie remembers wistfully, "I held my microphone...and sang at the top of my lungs. I did poses like a ballerina. I practiced my entrance and exit off the stage, and saw myself receiving an award for outstanding performance. I was invincible; the world was at my feet."

For several years, those magical moments softened the reality of living in a two-room house with her parents and eight siblings. They eased the differences Connie noticed between her life and those of her classmates. They mitigated the shame she felt about being from a family of poor migrant workers and the only Mexican family in Sherman County. Connie remembers, "I had no money, no role models, no appropriate clothing. I did not speak properly. I did not have training in etiquette. I did not even know how to say please and thank you or chew with my mouth shut." But none of that mattered when Connie donned the purple gloves. Her purple glove dreams fueled her dreams and provided her motivation for a better life.

Whenever Connie told anyone about her purple glove dreams, they laughed and mocked her. So she stopped sharing her dreams with them. She was determined, even though she admits, "I didn't know how I was going to succeed, but I didn't care."

While Connie's parents raised her to embrace a lifestyle that included a traditional subservient marriage, Connie had other influences. One of her teachers, Mrs. Hazel, told her, "No matter what anyone tells you, *YOU* are going to college." The words stuck in her head. Another teacher, Mrs. Carter, posted a sign in her classroom that read, "Believe. Act as if it is here now. Become." Connie read those words everyday and embodied the concept.

In spite of the reality she lived and even though her parents had no interest in seeing her go to college, Connie dreamed of being an educated lady. As she grew into her teens, she envisioned a life where she worked in the city, in a high rise building, being smart, well-dressed, and doing something important. She told no one, but firmly believed it would happen.

When she was in high school, Connie got a part-time job as a waitress at the local Dairy Queen. She noticed "the white boy who worked at the gasoline station across Highway 54." One day Connie says that boy, Denton Harryman, "was looking for a pretty girl to take a ride in his 'new' car" - a '57 Pontiac he bought for one dollar. She was that pretty girl. Soon the teenagers started dating. An unexpected pregnancy led to marriage and, though it seemed like a side-step at the time, it wasn't the end of her dreams.

In fact, she rejected the rigid male-female roles of her parent's marriage. Evaluating her mother's life, she "decided that it was quite lacking." So she visualized how her marriage would be different,

constantly analyzed what “different” would look like. She saw a marriage that was not only happy, but one that supported her dreams.

As a result, marriage to Denton opened doors that neither of them expected. Denton’s job with Phillips Petroleum took the couple and eventually, their two daughters, around the country and even to Europe. Still dreaming of getting her college education, Connie took courses whenever she could. While taking care of her daughters during the day, she worked nights to pay for her education. She took college courses in different states, and even in Belgium. Though it took her nearly eighteen years to get her undergraduate degree, Connie finally received her diploma in 1986.

Almost immediately, Connie was hired by AT&T as an account executive. Just as she envisioned it years earlier, she worked in the city, in a high rise, and managed multi-million dollar accounts. Her purple glove magic was working for her!

During the next ten years, Denton’s work evolved. He and Connie started a software development company. It grew and became successful. Connie left AT&T and returned to school. In a better financial place, and with her children grown and out of college, Connie totally enjoyed her post-graduate experience. She earned her MBA in 1999.

Personally and financially successful and ready to scale down, Connie and Denton moved to Greenville, South Carolina and bought a condo. Some people might say that was the time for Connie to savor her victories, enjoy her successes and relax. She might actually have taken that route, but life had a different plan.

When attending a creativity conference in Singapore, Connie says, “My life changed. I began a new business.” She became a creativity developer, working with corporations to develop creative thinking skills. She started her own company, Applied Concepts Creativity with her partner, Lars Ringe, from Denmark. She trains employees to make “mindshifts”, that is, how to shift their thinking from a belief of “nothing is possible” to “everything is possible.”

Based on her own experiences, Connie offers women several great tips for achieving success:

- **Take baby steps.** “I always did just one small thing that would move me forward. Sometimes that small thing was to read a story. Reader’s Digest was a big part of my life. I would read stories about others who had succeeded. I especially liked stories about women, girls, and related poverty.
- **Have a dream and go after it.** Quit listening to people who do not want you to succeed.
- **Do a mind shift.** Limitations do not exist, except in your own mind, so do a mind shift and think of a new life without constraints.
- **Associate with successful people.** Truly successful people want others to succeed and are generous with their own knowledge.
- **Show Up!** Eighty percent of success comes from just showing up. Do not wait for things to be perfect or for the perfect timing. This is only an excuse for procrastination.

Congratulations, Connie!

You are a model of focus, persistence and creativity.
You remind us to open our minds - just like when we were young girls,
and think about the limitless possibilities for our lives.

Thank you for helping us take our next Victorious Woman step!

Learn more about Connie Harryman, Creativity Developer, and her creative mind mapping at www.AppliedConceptsCreativity.com, 864-527-5930