



KAREN FLAM

VICTORIOUS WOMAN ESSAY CONTEST 2010

FIRST PRIZE WINNER

FLAM'S FABULOUS CAREER TRANSFORMATION

My story begins in the year 2000 when I had an epiphany – in the teeny tiny shower (think cruise ship bathroom small) of my rent stabilized Manhattan apartment. Good ideas always seem to come to me in the shower – or in a dream at 3 or 4 in the morning. This idea was in the shower. You see, I had been visiting day spas to relax from my stressful job as a Project Management Officer at a major investment bank (Barclay's Capital). I absolutely loathed it there. The hours were far too long, and the work was more like corporate babysitter than anything else. I rarely got to see my pug, and hardly ever got to see my boyfriend. I saw the Jamaican line cooks in the corporate cafeteria for breakfast and lunch daily and 3 nights a week I ate dinner there too. Things had to change!

I had recently visited a downtown spa for a facial and while I was “under the lamp” I felt a pinch. “Ouch.”, I said. Then another pinch. “Ouch!” I exclaimed. “What the heck are you doing?” I asked the Bulgarian facialist. “Extractions, dahlink. You need.” Right then and there I knew that I could do this better!

So one morning in the shower it came to me. “OPEN a spa of your own and call it SPA F.L.A.M. (For Ladies And Men)”, said the voice in my head.

So one gorgeous sunny morning of my 30th birthday, I was already at my office at 7:05 AM. By 7:20 had received approximately 17 single line directive e-mails from my manager stating, “Do this. Do this. Do that.” When I asked if I could get help on some of these tasks from our department's intern was flatly told, “No.” It was a done deal. After all, you only turn 30 once, and I wasn't about to spend it in my office.

I picked up my \$250 Alligator pumps, snatched up my jacket and purse and marched up to my boss's door and gave it a knock. “This better be important” he snapped. He was on the phone and hung it up. “Well, I think it is.” I replied. “I'm quitting.” No reaction. None. Just a blank stare.

I left. No 2 weeks notice, no nothin'. My mother's voice sharply scolding in my brain “Now, don't burn any bridges dear!”.

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Bridge burnt, Didn't care.

Nine days later I enrolled in esthetician school. The transformation had begun.

I was able to graduate from the esthetician school in less than 4 months by taking classes and putting in "clinic hours" 6-7 days per week. I also completed basic and advanced make-up artistry and took workshops on electrolysis and waxing. Within a week of graduating, I was asked to become an instructor at my school.

I completely re-vamped the science curriculum, and designed a new course on purchasing spa equipment. Many new estheticians do not know anything about starting up a spa of their own. The classes were well attended and well received.

I decided to open SPA F.L.A.M. (For Ladies And Men) in the summer of 2000, with the Grand Opening in September 2000. We had a single treatment room facility on Manhattan's Upper East side, and initially focused only on holistic skin care. A few months later massage therapy services were added, due to client demand. We were off to a rocking start and SPA F.L.A.M. (For Ladies And Men) remained in business until early 2005, when I sold the business to better tend to my next project, my brand new daughter, Allison Flam.

The experience of leaving corporate America to become an independent business woman, and later a mother has proven to be the most expansive time of rapid personal growth in my life. I feel truly blessed and victorious.

Congratulations Karen!

You show those of us who are sick and tired of being sick and tired that there is MORE for us to BE, DO and HAVE - if we have the courage to make the (often challenging) victory stretch into our bigger and better selves.

Glad you showed us one way of doing it!

You can find out what Karen's up to now at:
<http://www.aromatherapyalliance.org>

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