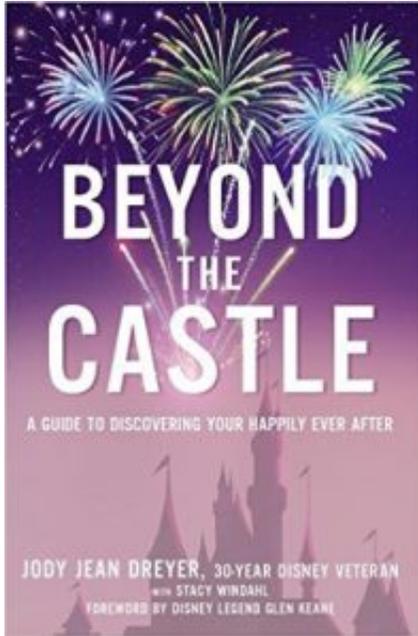


Business, Philanthropy, Faith and Family. Beyond the Castle by Jody Jean Dreyer. A Book Review



This is the most fun and inspiring book I have read in a long time. The tag line states “A Guide to Discovering your Happily Ever After” and I agree with this. But it is also a look into the business of making the magic of Disney. Jody Jean Dreyer has packed this book with family anecdotes, business strategy and faith into a book that will be hard to categorize in the library.

Before I go further, full disclosure, Jody's Disney tenure and mine span roughly the same 30-year period. We worked together, and for one of her 22 Disney jobs I worked for her, but most importantly we are good friends that have a certain affection for a mouse. Our biggest disagreement over the years has been the rivalry between Disneyland and Walt Disney World. I won't get into this other than to remind readers that Disneyland is the original, Walt's Park.

Jody started in the College Program at Walt Disney World (WDW), the following summer she went back as a dancer in the Tencennial Parade, joined the marketing department, was WDW Ambassador (when I first met her) rose the marketing ranks and then came out to California as the Corporate Synergy guru and chief of staff for CEO Michael Eisner. This is all for context, as this book isn't about Jody's career, although it provides the framework, it's about different themes. Jody loves themes. The themes, or chapters, cover life lessons such as Vacations, Tiaras, Story and Fireworks.

One chapter that really spoke to me is “What's Inside: Cultivating Integrity.” Jody talks about The Core, the old family farm, Grandma Carbiener (Jody's maiden name is Carbiener), good honest

hard work and “uncovering the promise you are uniquely equipped to make.” Roy E. Disney, then Vice Chair of the company said at a shareholders meeting, “The Walt Disney Company is more than just a business. It is an authentic American icon – which is to say that over the years it has come to stand for something real and meaningful and worthwhile to millions of people of all ages and backgrounds around the world.” Jody and Roy had a fascinating conversation about “branding,” but you’ll have to read the book for this fun story.

“Enjoy the Ride: Get in Line and Hold on Tight.” This chapter teaches us to enjoy the journey, not just the destination. And that life is a ride and like a roller coaster it has its ups and downs, and a few sharp curves. “Personally, I want to get in line, seize the moment, and go for broke... So get in line. Any line. You won’t regret it. Take the job, wander the unbeaten path, enroll in a crazy class, order something you have never tasted before. Be open to the possibilities.” Dick Cook, the former chairman of The Walt Disney Studios often said, “Why do it if we’re going to do it half way?” Jody said, “he taught me to show up, jump in, and do my part to make it great.” Life is too precious not to go for it and make every day count.



My chapter is called “Open Hands: Show Your Character.” Jody says, “Don’t underestimate the powerful difference you can make in your neighborhood, in your community, and in the world by opening your hands and heart.” Show Your Character is a fun play on words that we used often when encouraging our Cast Members (Disney employees) and well as the public (particularly youth) when discussing, promoting, recognizing and celebrating volunteering. Disney VoluntEARS around the world give of their time for important causes, many focused on children, including work with Boys & Girls Clubs, Make-A-Wish, children’s hospitals amongst others. It’s not really “my chapter” but I did get a shout out!

The book ends with “Happily Ever After: It’s Never Too Late.” In this chapter Jody talks about transition. “So how do we cope with all that change, celebrating what’s new while grieving what’s lost? How do we manage the transitions, the big and the daily, the sad and the delightful changes alike? Oh, I wish I knew.” I think she does know. When I left Disney, Jody gave me a plaque with a saying that had been passed to her by a friend that says: “Don’t cry because it’s over. Smile because it happened.” This sits next to my desk today. “Perspective is everything. Changing perspective is the greatest gift of your time on the move... Possibilities abound with an expectant heart.” Beyond the Castle is an uplifting book that makes you think, feel, maybe shed a tear and definitely laugh.

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