

Brick by Brick: A Woman's Journey

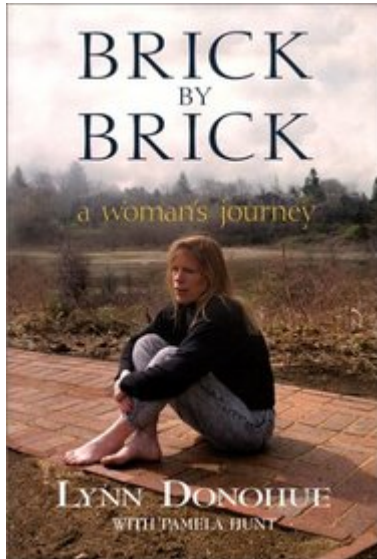


by
Marilyn
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In my search for some new inspiration, I came upon a book with local ties by Lynn Donohue called, *Brick by Brick: A Woman's Journey*. In 2001, this book was a finalist for the Ben Franklin Award for best autobiography. Since its publication in 2000, the book has motivated thousands of women to overcome obstacles.

Brick by Brick is an inspiring true story about a woman who comes of age in New Bedford during the 1970's. Her compelling story reminds us that one random act can change your direction in life. You may read an article or bump into someone on the street and your life can take an entirely new direction. The book is also a story about pursuing your dreams and goals and overcoming obstacles that may seem insurmountable, one step at a time.

Lynn was adrift in her younger years, a high school dropout with no direction. She was tending bar at her father's place, The Belmont, in New Bedford, and began to tire of days spent in a dark, smoky bar watching the regulars drink their lives away. She longed for something better, even though at the time she wasn't quite sure what that was to become. Outside of work she had also seen some of her friends begin to lose their battle with drug and alcohol addiction, which further pushed her to find a new path.



One day, while working at the Belmont, she picked up the local newspaper and noticed a small ad looking for women who were interested in training for “non-traditional jobs” for women, such as masonry, carpentry and electrical work. These positions paid \$17 an hour, which was quite a lot at that time, especially compared to her minimum wage earnings at the bar (even with tips). This intrigued Lynn, and her decision to take the steps to pursue the training needed would place her on that new path in life.

Lynn developed a passion for bricklaying and against all odds, she pursued her dream. This passion for masonry, with the rhythmic motion of laying brick, helped her find inner calm and personal strength, even as she was discriminated against as a woman in a man’s profession. But she worked hard and eventually Lynn became the first female member of the Bricklayers Local 39, working on construction projects from Cape Cod to Boston.

After a decade of working as a bricklayer she founded Argus Construction Corp., which began with two employees and a pickup truck and grew into a multi-million dollar business with fifty full-time employees. Many of the men she eventually hired to work for her company had initially been those who scoffed at the idea of a woman working in a so-called “man’s job.” Being the boss was the best revenge! Lynn made sure that she personally thanked them for a job well done as she handed out their paychecks each week.

What makes this story so compelling is that Lynn built the life she wanted for herself, little by little, brick by brick, becoming a master of herself. She took pride in the accomplishment of building something with her own hands, something that would be here long after she was gone. For those of you who live in the South Coast area, you will

recognize many of the places mentioned in Lynn's book.



Besides being an author, Lynn is a consultant and does speaking engagements.

Whenever I drive by buildings that Lynn had helped to build, such as the downtown New Bedford bus terminal or the Car Barn on Weld Square, I no longer see just a building; I see Lynn, working hard in the rain and the cold, coming back day after day when many others would have quit. She struggled to better her own life while at the same time paving the way for other women to do whatever they felt was necessary or what they were passionate about, to improve their lives, against all odds.

Lynn eventually used her profits to give back and established the Brick by Brick Foundation, a non-profit organization in New Bedford, MA, to help high school students and others struggling in their careers. Today she also teaches workshops and is an inspirational speaker at women's conferences, trade associations and academic institutions across the country. She inspires audiences to overcome obstacles to personal and professional development through a positive attitude, perseverance and a "can do" spirit.

Many lives touched and changed, and to think it all started with a newspaper ad read, a decision made, a new path

pursued...step by step, brick by brick.