Any Dream Will Do

By

Jessica Michallick

Most of my schooling took place at the Indiana School for the Blind in Indianapolis, Indiana.

My teachers decided I was going to learn Braille, even though I not only knew the complete print alphabet, and numbers, but learned better by sight. I was also told I would be graduating at 21 and only get a certificate of completion. This meant no college in Indiana would take me because they all required high school diplomas. Most of my life was spent living up to the embarrassingly low expectations of my teachers.

Deep down I knew I could do it, but the people I thought knew me better than I did (my teachers) had spoken! This caused me to ignore the voice in my head telling me to prove them wrong. Right when my dreams had changed from being a teacher to marrying a man who didn't mind supporting a dependant blind girl, I found out we were moving to Texas. Unlike Indiana, where you were instantly thrust into the world of lost dreams known as The Blind School, here they tested you in a public school to see how you did. So, suddenly I was plunging head first into the cold unknown waters of the Austin Independent School District.

Middle school felt like trying a new ride at an amusement park. I had never been so excited and horrified in my life! One day it was announced that Bailey Middle School was having tryouts for its annual musical, *Bye Bye Birdie.* So, I took the plunge and signed up to audition. I went in to it not expecting much. I was a girl with a desire to be in the theater, and knew I would be mad at myself if I didn't try out.

I walked in to the cafeteria/auditorium ready to just have fun. When they started handing out sheet music and monologues my heart sank. ISB started controlling my thoughts again. What are you doing here? I thought to myself. Sneak out now while you

have a shred of dignity! However, my passion for the stage held me to my spot.

I had memorized the lyrics to an entire musical, which I had on CD, in no time. So, during rehearsal I concentrated on the lyrics the way I did my CD, and sang out just as loud and proud as any of the people who were looking at the music. For my monologue, I had to do a cold read. This meant the director gave me a situation such as, you are telling your friend that a celebrity had just moved into the neighborhood, and I had to make a scene around it. I did this my whole life! I always called it playing and now it was coming in handy. God gave me the ability to memorize song lyrics and movies quickly. plus, the desire to act out my own scene based on these movies, and this was why.

To my amazement I made the play! It was then that I realized I could do anything that they could do. No longer would I live up to the expectations of others. To top it all off, the director saw it as a plus that I couldn't read the song, and was able to memorize it on the spot. All those things I saw as just making me different from the rest of the world, or just things I taught my self to do, turned out to be perks!

Now I am a graduate from one of the top ten school in the U.S, and made honor role every year. Now, as I get ready to complete the first semester of college the reality has struck me that while others may tell you something is impossible, only you know your limitations. Take it from me, it's fun to dream, but it's thrilling to make those dreams realities.

Jess,

This is an inspiring story. You overcame the odds and did things you once considered impossible. By using your special talents combined with your courage to go for it, you achieved your dream.

You listened to your own inner voice which was wise even though others said you couldn't do it.

The very things that made you different also made you special and unique. You have some special talents like your ability to memorize song lyrics so quickly and easily and your ability to improvise a scene.

I know that your goal is to work as a teacher or teacher's aide with special needs children. You will be able to use your ability to perform to inspire the children to believe in themselves. Your story and example of pursuing a college education in spite of big obstacles will be motivational for the students you teach.

This was an excellent success story and I enjoyed reading it.

Professor Gerson

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