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Spotlight On...

Brette McWhorter Sember
by Lisa Beamer

I'm not sure how many lawyers decide to quit practicing law in order to be stay-at-home parents and pursue writing careers, but that is exactly what Brette McWhorter Sember did three years ago. "We would lay in bed at night and I would unload my stress on [my husband]," recalls Brette. "He would ask, 'What is it you would do if you could do anything?' The answer was, 'Write.'"

Brette's decision has proven to be a good one. She has authored five books and has had articles appear in 70 publications since staying home. She couldn't have done it without her husband of 11 ½ years, Terrence. "He encouraged me to close my law practice and become an at-home mother and writer because it was what I needed to do, despite the financial difficulties it caused us. I would never have had the courage to face the disapproval from family and friends when I made my decision were it not for him."

Daughter Quinne, eight, and son Zayne, three, now enjoy Mom's company at home while Brette enjoys her many accomplishments. She writes on a wide range of subjects, from poetry and essays to self-help law books and articles about family life and parenting. "I think my favorite thing to write about," says Brette, "is either personal essays or poetry. Both fulfill a need I have to express my feelings."

Writing might be in the genes for Brette, as her mother was an accomplished author of college textbooks. From an early age, Brette was writing. "I remember making books when I was a child. I would draw and write a story on the pages and staple them together." In her collection, she also has numerous notebooks full of poetry she wrote in her high school years.

Brette recently discovered another emerging side of her artistic self. "I love decorating, and when we moved into our house this summer, I did the whole house myself and the results are terrific. I just recently painted a mirror and can't believe how well it turned out. Lately I have had an urge to paint, but have not had the guts to do anything about it yet!"

When Brette isn't working in her home office in Clarence, New York, she enjoys cooking, playing with her kids and dogs and reading. Her favorite authors include Sue Grafton, Marcia Muller and Diane Mott Davidson. e. e. Cummings is her favorite poet.

Some fun facts about Brette:

Favorite quote "Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." (Muriel Strode)

Biggest pet peeve She's got two of them-regional parenting publications that use her work without telling her or paying her and "the ridiculous formality of the querying process required by large print mags."

Favorite vacation spot Naples, Florida and Boston, Massachusetts both top her list.

The last movie she saw Meet the Parents. "We had a sitter and couldn't find anything else to see." Her rating? "It was awful."

If Brette could have lunch with any person in the world, she would choose her husband. "Time alone is so precious, and there is always so much to talk about."


Brette believes that the biggest roadblock to success as a writer is the inability to get beyond feeling like you have no talent. "I have learned to just write and not worry about if it is good or not. Mostly, it is good. I have learned to take risks and try new things. It is so important to remember that you are a writer because you love to write. Don't let yourself lose the joy."

The five books Brette has published are How to File for Divorce in New York, Landlords' Rights and Duties in New York, How to Form a Corporation in New York, Tenants' Rights in New York and How to Repair Your Own Credit and Solve Your Debt Problem (this latter title is due out in the spring of 2001). She has also contributed to How to Do Everything and Family Fun Activities (also due out in spring of 2001).

You will find Brette's web site at www.MooseintheBirdbath.com, and she can be reached at seember@adelphia.net.

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