

“If I Can You Can”
Audacity Magazine Article
By Karen Lynn
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Many, many years ago, when I was only 5 months old, I became paralyzed due to a DPT shot and a doctor who refused to listen to a wise woman, whom I called mama. Over night, I fell into a deep, deep sleep, and did not wake for 10 days. The doctors declared that I would be deaf, dumb and blind, but I fooled them all. That was 55 ½ years ago. Since then, I have continued to rewrite the scrip of every professional, person, and doctor who had the audacity and nerve to emphatically tell me that I could not reach my highest potential, or dream, and that I couldn't become!

Well, that happened many times in my life's unraveling journey. But I rose above it all-Hi everyone. My name is Karen Lynn, and I have Cerebral Palsy and a learning disability called dyslexia. 18 months after being diagnosed, my mother found a dance teacher in Los Angeles. Dance lessons began and Al Gilbert not only took me under his wing, and gave me his unconditional love, but he taught me to dance. Soon, I was hopping, skipping, and jumping, like other young children my age. And at 11 years old, I was able to hang up my full length leg brace-never having to wear it again.

I am writing you this article not only to inspire you, but to tell you that you are not alone. Anything is possible if you work toward your dreams and believe in yourself. In my day, things were much different. Inclusion was not yet born, and mainstreaming was just around the bend. Because I was not learning like other children, my mother took matter into her own hands and spoke to the principal of the school. Soon thereafter, my school had the first instructor who understood my disability.

Sadly, after her departure, at age twelve, I spent the next 6 crucial years being passed from one class to another, never learning a thing. This pattern reasserts itself throughout my life, and yours. We are forever linking achievement with struggle and wasting precious energy getting around stereotypes and prejudice. That is where my basic thrust for knowledge first took shape, but I got tired of being defined by other people's rules.

After several years of struggling with all the biases part of the work world, I decided I had to get a degree. There were no if's, and's, or but's! I had no idea I would be making history. My “good friends” at the California State Department of Rehabilitation, demonstrated their usual amount of helpful support. This was the second time, in my life, where I was conveniently labeled mentally retarded because of an I.Q. test. Something within the depths of my being was afire! The next thing I knew, I fought and won the first Civil Rights Case in 1979 under the Rehab. Act of 1973.

This took place 13 years before the American's with Disability Act. And to be very honest with you, I am honored and so proud to have laid the foundation and foot work for what came later. As I am sure each and every one of you has done in your very own way.

Five years after winning my lawsuit, I earned an Associate's Arts Degree in Dance and English. That was in 1985, Two years prior to graduation, in 1983, I won second prize in the Kaleidoscope International Prose Fiction Art Awards, for my book in it infancy. Moreover, I became a fitness instructor, and have freelance since I was 26 years old. I have geared my entire life toward advocating and teaching the disabled community. I have given to others what was so freely given to me.

In addition, I have sat on the Executive Board of Protection and Advocacy Inc., as well as Harbor Regional's, Client Services Committee, in the South Bay, of Southern California. I have participated in 5 different Disabilities Expos where I had my own booths and taught hour long demonstrations. I have also lectured, at universities, schools, and organizations, as well as participating and leading book reading events for VSA Arts, in New Jersey. To make these events possible, I have traveled throughout the United States to give of myself, and our common cause.

But, I must tell you, I am most proud of my recent publication of my book, The Broken Hoof. You can purchase this book at your local book store by special ordering it, or, you can purchase it on line at amazon.com., publishamerica.com, barnsandnoble.com, or bordersstores.com. I welcome you to visit my website at: www.whispersofhope.org and if you'd like to contact me, or arrange an exercise session, or public speaking engagement, please feel free to write or call. You will find all pertinent information on my website. I know that writing this article has been a joy and will help spread the message among all magazine readers in the community.