SECOND STORIES
How 10 People Transformed Their Post-Career Lives
Jackson® and photographer Fred Siegel bring you the images and stories of 10 people who have transitioned from their careers in unexpected ways to create inspirational second stories. From spiritual journeys and volunteering to rediscovering old passions and starting brand-new careers, these are people revolutionizing the traditional idea of retirement and courageously beginning exciting new chapters. Along the way, they’re living their purpose—a catalyst to creating second stories that rival, or even surpass, their first.

As you read these second stories, think about what yours might be. What passion or purpose may be waiting for you?
Bob Oswaks • 3
Bob had a glamorous job as president of worldwide marketing for Sony. When he was laid off, he reinvented himself as an artisan baker and found his true calling.

Christie Ciraulo • 5
Christie enjoyed a successful career in public relations. When she retired, she used her newfound free time to go back to her first love—competitive swimming.

John Hunter • 7
John worked his way to the top as an executive at QVC. After years of the fast pace, he followed a calling to explore his family’s rich history and turned it into art.

Anne Reigeluth • 9
Anne put her heart into raising her children. After a cancer diagnosis and a difficult recovery, she put her heart into providing spiritual and emotional support for others as a hospice chaplain.

Terry Bromberg • 11
Terry worked as a publisher and marketer, but teaching has always been his real passion. Now, he volunteers his time to teach math to high-risk youth and former gang members.

Kate Greer • 13
Kate left her job in Silicon Valley looking to reframe the pain from her mother’s death and lead a more joyful life. Now, she guides others to do the same.

Jim Botticelli • 15
Jim is an occasional soul DJ and ex-English teacher now making a name for himself documenting the history of the city he loves.

Jana Lynne Sanchez • 17
Jana loved working and traveling in Europe while running her PR agency. But, a drive to reconnect with her community led her to return home and run for Congress.

Stuart Siegel • 19
Stuart used his creativity to design marketing pieces for big-name brands before rediscovering an old passion for photography and turning it into a new career.

Kelly Hoey • 21
Kelly was a corporate lawyer for more than a decade before realizing that her true passion lay in helping other people realize their dreams.
Bob Oswaks had a glamorous job as president of worldwide marketing for Sony. When he was laid off, he reinvented himself as an artisan baker and found his true calling.
Bob Oswaks
Age: 60
Home: Los Alamos, CA
Purpose: Sharing the love of bread and the good life with his customers in a small California town.

Q: You had a glamorous job at Sony Pictures Entertainment. What happened?

A: I got laid off after eleven years at Sony and thirty years in Hollywood, marketing TV shows like “Seinfeld,” “Breaking Bad” and “Jeopardy.” I had responsibility for seventy senior people all over the world. It was a great job, but in Hollywood, all good things come to an end. One of the first things I did after getting the news was talk to Norman Lear, the legendary TV producer I had worked with earlier in my career. He said, “Life isn’t about sticking with that one thing forever. Over and next. What’s next for you?”

Q: How did you pivot away from that and become a baker?

A: When you’ve never been out of work before, you’re not thinking “I’m going to switch careers,” you’re thinking, “I’m going to go back to another studio with another executive job.” I started making bread when I was waiting for Hollywood headhunters to call—just keeping my hands and my mind busy. But the headhunters told me, “You’re fifty—you’re not going to get that job again.” So, I kept making bread because people were saying how good it was, and maybe the universe was telling me that’s what I should be doing. I decided to go to San Francisco Baking Institute and learn about making good bread consistently, whatever the conditions, because bread is a living thing. It’s more science than art.

FROM BREAKING BAD TO BAKING BREAD

Q: How did you turn your baking at home into your own artisan bakery business?

A: It started with a good contact and a little luck. An event planner I knew from Sony was working on a big polo event for Prince William. They needed bread, and she told them about me. So, I brought over a loaf of everything I make. They smelled it and tasted it and asked if I could do this for 800 people. My wife found me a commercial kitchen. I got my brother to help me, and we did it. They included me on the menu. I started getting calls from caterers asking if I could bake the bread from Prince William’s party. This was not what I was planning to do.

But I started wondering if maybe this dream of having some artisanal small business in the country could happen. It took two years to create my business plan, and we opened up in 2012. It’s been great—we’re packed almost every day.

Q: So what are the rewards? And what can others learn from you about finding a new purpose later in life?

A: In a large corporation, the best you’ll get is a pat on the back from your boss and a bonus. But, when you’re doing something that’s so tangible and so basic like baking bread, you’re not just feeding people, you’re feeding their souls. It’s meaningful. It’s something more than just bread for my customers. Women on chemotherapy come in wearing headscarves because they’re feeling good today and only wanting to visit my café. Sometimes, it gets you a little choked up. That is a reward. The feeling you get when you donate hundreds of loaves to feed the first responders during the huge brushfires—that’s a reward, too.

When you have one of those big jobs, you get all the trappings that go with it. When you don’t have that anymore, you’re forced to find what really matters in your life and recalibrate. Most people never take the exit ramp off the job freeway. Sometimes, you have to be forced off the road to see what’s right in front of you.
Christie Ciraulo enjoyed a successful career in public relations and owned a publishing business. When she retired, she used her newfound free time to go back to her first love—competitive swimming.
Christie Ciraulo
Age: 64
Home: West Los Angeles, CA

Purpose: Inspiring others to stay fit and raising money for children's causes through her love of swimming.

Q: Tell us about your professional life.
A: I finished my in-the-office career as a hospital public relations person and started a desktop publishing business. Meanwhile, my father had been producing a book called “The Accounting Desk Book” for many years. It was the family business, but he was becoming frail. So my mom, brother and I pulled together to get the new edition ready. Ever since, I’ve been editing and writing it from home, before it was hip to work out of the house. When Mom passed away last year, we told the publisher we couldn’t do it anymore. It was harder to give up emotionally than professionally.

Q: You’ve been a competitive pool swimmer for much of your life, but you committed to ocean swimming in recent years. What’s the attraction for you?
A: It’s almost euphoric. There’s always somebody to swim with, so you never go it alone. You can be out there and all of a sudden, a pod of dolphins goes by or you can see a whale spouting. I’m just swimming along for maybe an hour or more and thinking what’s under me is infinity. I can clear my mind of everything else. The conditions are always challenging, but I’ve never been scared. If there’s salt water, there’s going to be sharks. But, I’m much more afraid of boat propellers than sharks.

Q: Your Mighty Mermaids relay team has won dozens of medals around the world. How did you start it?
A: Right before I turned 50, it was getting harder to get in the pool. So, I thought, “What do I like best?” The answer was open-water swimming and hanging with my friends. So, I sent out an email to the top female swimmers in older age groups. Believe me, the hardest thing is to get people to commit to an open-water relay, but these six women were all over it. We’ll be together for our eleventh annual swim this summer. Fast, fabulous and over fifty—that’s our motto. We’ve raised a lot of money for children’s causes, like kids who are going through chemotherapy and dialysis.

Q: You’ve won hundreds of personal swimming awards. How does it feel to be this successful at your age?
A: Nobody’s more surprised than I am. In my fifties, I was going faster than I did in high school, and that’s pretty startling. It could just be my dedication to working out almost every day. There are plenty of people who are faster than me but don’t get in the water. I have always shown up. You’re not going to win Lotto if you don’t buy a ticket. We’re already slotted for a relay across the English Channel in 2019.

Q: So many people are looking for purpose. What’s the meaning of swimming for you?
A: It’s almost an accidental mission. Leading a healthy lifestyle and taking care of yourself physically sends positive vibes to the people around you. It helps encourage people that they can have that, too. I’ve been very lucky in my life because I’ve always been able to swim and meet really great people at the pool or the beach. My life philosophy is you have to give back, but there’s no reason why you can’t work out hard and have fun doing it.
John Hunter worked his way to the top as an executive at QVC. After years of the fast pace, he followed a calling to explore his family’s rich history and turned it into art.
At age 62, you made a big change at the height of your professional success. Why the sudden decision at that point?

A: I spent the last 22 years of my career at QVC, the TV shopping channel. The company was quite young when I joined to manage their call centers and customer service. All the business was done over the phone in those days since there was no website, yet. I rose to EVP and was running operations all over the world—a 72-hour-a-week job.

Nearing 62, there was a turning point. I realized that I had worked so intensely for so long that mentally I had gotten disconnected from my family. I also watched people younger than me develop health problems. One friend, before he passed away from cancer, told me that he would give anything for more time with his wife and family. That stuck with me, even though I felt great. So, I decided to leave QVC while I was on top and figure out the next phase later. It felt scary because I never really thought it through.

Q: So, how did it work out in those first few months?

A: I started getting all these great offers to join boards and do consulting work. I came home all flattered and excited like a child, but my wife stopped me in my tracks. She said to give myself a year to see what I may want to do before I jumped back into the fire. All I had to guide me was a little bucket list on the back of a napkin—all pretty random, just travel to a few places and take some classes.

Q: How did you find your way into what have become your new passions: art and your family’s ancestry?

A: I’d always wondered about my family history and especially my grandfather’s story—he earned three advanced degrees but ended up a night watchman. He never fulfilled his capabilities, while I had all the advantages of the black middle class in the 60s. I felt a kinship that he paved the way for my success. I also wondered about his fair skin, hazel eyes and reddish-brown hair. With some help from a genealogist at Ancestry.com, I visited the little town on the Caribbean island of Montserrat where my grandfather was born. It turns out, many former African slaves intermarried with Irish indentured servants there—that’s why I have 18% Irish blood and why my grandfather looked the way he did. I just fell in love with the beauty and peacefulness of the island, and especially the church that my family attended for generations. My spirit felt very much at home.

At around the same time, I started taking drawing classes at the local arts center near home. As a teenager, I sketched cartoons and drew pictures for my kids to color. I always loved art but never explored my talent. As I developed my artwork, I started using Montserrat as the subject—I wanted to capture on canvas all its meaning for me. I’m not Picasso, but I have a story to tell.

Q: What advice would you give people who might want to discover their new purpose later in life?

A: So many people fear that if they retire, they’re done and might as well roll up into a ball and never do anything else. But retirement is another chapter—not the end of the book. Be open to the fact that you don’t know what your retirement will look like. Don’t be afraid to explore what’s in your next chapter. In your working life, you have to be practical and stick with what you know. Now is the chance to see what experiences have taught you and what you can find that’s more fulfilling. Give yourself the freedom and time to discover who you are. Because who you have been may be different than who you can become.

“Give yourself the freedom and time to discover who you are. Because who you have been may be different than who you become.”

FROM TELEVISION EXEC TO PAINTING A NEW PICTURE
Anne Reigeluth put her heart into raising her children. After a cancer diagnosis and difficult recovery, she put her heart into providing spiritual and emotional support for others as a hospice chaplain.
Anne Reigeluth
Age: 66
Home: Pawling, NY
Purpose: Helping those in need find peace in the darkest of times.

Q: How did you find your purpose?
A: I was a stay-at-home mother—that was my career choice. I loved raising my kids, but like all kids, they left the nest. When I was fifty years old, I was diagnosed with cancer and went through a lot of surgery and intense chemotherapy treatment. I was so moved by the extraordinary medical people that I met—the nurses, the aides, and the doctors—and by my friends and family who gave me all those cards, meals, and flowers. People’s love and kindness and caring spoke in a way that said: This is the meaning of life for me. I never want to forget it, and I want my life to be one of giving back.

Q: After that revelation, what were the steps to get you where you are now?
A: When I finished chemo and surgery, it took me quite awhile to feel like I was ready to go back into the world and do something. My first step was volunteering at a hospital on the Oncology floor and then in their hospice program. That grew in me quickly, and I decided I wanted to train to be a professional hospice chaplain. Simultaneously, I became interested in Buddhism, thanks to some books my son gave me. I had suffered a lot physically during my illness, and meditation helped. All my pastoral training was about being with suffering and guiding people to open to it.

Q: Describe your practice now.
A: I am a non-denominational chaplain, trained in all the different religions. I serve everyone in the way that they need to be served, in hospice residence, the hospital, or at home. My ongoing Buddhist training and retreats are all about being present. Can I have 360-degree awareness? Can I hear, see, and use all my senses to help the person who’s in front of me and give them what they need? For example, I’ve been working with the family of a developmentally disabled girl who’s now declining. This girl and her family have touched me so deeply. I try to connect to their heart, to where the burning questions might be.

Q: What’s your advice for other people who want to find their path to purpose?
A: A lot of people feel really alone and not connected to some larger purpose or community. They say: “I’m stuck and don’t know what to do or where to go.” But if you look, you might find it. You’re reading the newspaper, or you’re talking to somebody, or something appears online that sounds interesting. Go do it. If it doesn’t work out, try something else. You have to challenge yourself to step into something new—especially if it’s a little uncomfortable. We need to keep moving into new territory. It starts with one step into what your heart calls for. One day, you’ll look back and be amazed at how far each step has taken you.

People say all the time, “It must be so hard. You must be a saint to do this.” Not at all. I love the acute and difficult. I get energized by the challenges. There’s meaning in learning and growth in doing what we love. We all need to serve—it doesn’t matter what it is.

“We need to keep moving into new territory. It starts with one step into what your heart calls for.”

FROM HOMEMAKER TO FAITH MAKER
Terry Bromberg had a career as a publisher and marketer, but teaching has always been his real passion. Now, he volunteers his time to teach math to high-risk youth and former gang members.
Terry Bromberg
Age: 66
Home: Los Angeles, CA
Purpose: Preparing high-risk youth, former gang members, and the recently incarcerated for a second chance.

Q: How did you get involved with Homeboy Industries?

A: I had a very successful career in publishing and marketing. But it was about making a quarterly number. I was good at what I did, I made money and all that, but there wasn’t a real passion there. When our daughter was about to graduate high school, I realized that after so many years helping her with homework, there was now a void in my life. People have always told me that I’m a good teacher, and I’ve always felt somewhat of a kinship to the underdog, so this was a natural place to bring those two things together.

Q: What have you gotten from Homeboy?

A: It reinforced my belief that everyone deserves a second chance. And at Homeboy, there’s an aliveness from that. There are days when I’m teaching, and it feels as though I’m almost having an out-of-body experience. I’m sitting over here watching me and I like what I see. It’s very fulfilling when you see someone get their GED and driver’s license and stay clean and want to be an accountant or something like that. Sure, we do classroom work, but we talk also about life. Being a small part of helping someone along that road is really meaningful. Somewhere down deep, they’re probably thinking, “I don’t know why that guy cares about me, because few people in my life have, but he does.”

Q: People worry about finding their passion or purpose in retirement. What advice would you give them?

A: Try not to be fearful and think, “Oh my God, what am I going to do.” Approach it with a sense of adventure and a sense of gratitude. If you’re able to retire, and you’ve amassed some money to make yourself somewhat comfortable, celebrate your achievement and use your time wisely. I tell people that there are a million things to do. You’ve just got to find your things. It’s not one-size-fits-all by any stretch of the imagination.

It’s an adventure. Don’t be fearful of it—it’s just another phase, so take advantage of it. And that doesn’t have to mean selfless volunteering five days a week. See the grandkids more. Go to Iceland. Learn Swahili. What I would suggest is that you blend all those things and take advantage of the time. Just jump into the pool. Stick your toe into the water, and if it’s not the right pool, go to the next pool. The simplest things can do enormous good. Connecting to someone one-on-one—such as reading with a kid who might not have someone at home to do that for them—is gigantic.

Q: What have you learned about yourself working there?

A: I’m a firm believer that all of us walk around with stuff. There’s a broken part of all of us. There are no free lunches through this life—everyone gets bruised. It just depends on the size of the dings and how many there are. And, it’s all about what you choose to do with those dings. It’s not unlike what I say to a student who comes in here embarrassed about their lack of knowledge: “Let’s forget about that. You’re starting from wherever you’re starting. You’re going to move as fast as you can move, and who cares what the guy next to you is doing—so what? Everyone’s in a different place, so find yours.”
Kate Greer left her job in Silicon Valley looking to reframe the pain from her mother’s death and lead a more joyful life. Now, she guides others to do the same.
Kate Greer
Age: 52
Home: Occidental, CA

Purpose: Helping people tell new stories and inspiring them to greater self-discovery and joy.

Q: You made a big professional pivot at age fifty. What happened?

A: For twenty-five years, I helped other people’s dreams come true in the Silicon Valley. I was a digital product consultant, partnering with marketing and technology people in organizations to build “delightful” user experiences. I worked with places like AARP on websites to help experienced workers reinvent themselves. When I turned fifty, I just wasn’t feeling it anymore—I had had it with the city and my business there. I realized I was holding on to digital strategy because it was my identity and my source of money. I needed to give up those old patterns and identities.

Q: What else was behind your decision?

A: I had another pivot point in my life. Ten years ago, my mother ended her battle with depression by jumping in front of a train. She wasn’t happy and couldn’t help herself. I was equally unhappy—not suicidal, but my trajectory was not looking good unless I intervened in my own self-healing. I realized, if you don’t look inside and find your way through inner darkness, no one else can do that for you—no magic job or person.

Q: What was the new purpose inspired by your two big realizations?

A: I committed to compounding joy for myself and other people. Joy is feeling fully, experiencing a full range of human emotions, working to embrace everything happening to you, and continually evolving and telling the story of your life. So at fifty, I joined a reinvention coaching group and decided to train to be a coach. I wanted to help people lean in to the dream life they saw for themselves, like I had. I converted sixteen acres of redwoods north of San Francisco into a small group retreat center for personal transformation. I decided to call it the Compound of Joy.

Q: What were the obstacles to getting there?

A: What holds any of us back? Fear, self-doubt, other people’s conceptions of you and how they want you to stay a certain way. There are self-limiting beliefs—the, “oh, I can’t do that” voice. People fear change and they fear the unknown. You have to reframe the unknown. As Joseph Campbell said, “The cave you fear is the cave where the jewels lie.”

Q: What guidance would you give people seeking to transform themselves, as you did?

A: I started with the easier things and moved on to greater things. The more baby steps you take, the more momentum you build. If something is resonant, do more of it. Once you believe in your vision—live it. Good things happen by doing, not by talking about doing.

Remember that shifting how you tell your story to yourself and others shapes your reality completely. You have to look closely at what story you’re telling and not be limited by it. For instance, the “nobody loves me,” and “if only” stories. We’re taught to dream in tight containers and not listen to our souls. Over the course of our lives, that’s how little pieces of us keep getting snipped away.

You are mining for your essential ingredients. If you find them and bring them to light, you can have what you want and need. Every person on the planet can. Also, don’t forget that comparison is the thief of joy. It’s all about what you do with what you’ve got. That is the best strategy for self-love and self-healing. Find reasons to find joy.
Jim Botticelli is an occasional soul DJ and ex-English teacher now making a name for himself documenting history about the city he loves.
Jim Botticelli
Age: 69
Home: Boston, MA
Purpose: Bringing Boston’s gritty past to life for a new generation.

Q: How did you become a teacher?
A: I wasn’t sure what to do with my life, so I started out as a substitute teacher in the Boston public schools. I just kind of fell into it—but I was good at it. I wound up teaching English full-time for 30 years. I loved it for most of the time, but toward the end, I was ready to move on. In 2012, the golden handcuffs were unchained, and I retired. I’m very fortunate to have a pension—a lot of people I know have only a 401(k) or almost nothing.

Q: So what was the first thing you did when the cuffs were off?
A: I used to get up at 5:30 every morning, so I slept more. I went places with my girlfriend and spent more time with my two kids. I listened to more music, especially soul and R&B—that old vinyl stuff really calls to me. I started a Facebook page called Dirty Old Boston. It was just old pictures of the city I grew up in and loved; I shared images of when it was still a gritty and adventurous place and wrote clever captions. I’ve lived through a lot of changes here—whole neighborhoods knocked down and Boomers buying triple-deckers. I wanted to document how maybe something was being lost. I posted every day, people noticed, and it really took off. I did radio and TV interviews and got a publishing offer all in six months. Now, I’m making a documentary about it.

Q: Had you ever written a book or made a documentary?
A: I hadn’t written a book before, but how hard could it be? I was an English teacher, after all. My writing must be pretty good because we’re now in our third printing. The documentary, though, is an ongoing learning process. I’m outgoing and able to talk to people, but the hardest part is the editing. That’s something I hadn’t anticipated. So, I contacted people for advice—I wasn’t shy about asking how do I do that. Being a former soul and jazz DJ, I already knew what I had in mind for the original soundtrack. It’s going to sound like some of the Northern Soul, Funk, and Disco right out of my own collection. But if you want to know which one of my old 45s is the prototype for “Dirty Old Boston,” I’d say “Dirty Water” by the Standells, although they were an LA-based band, ironically. I’m excited to see the soundtrack come together with the pictures.

Q: Sounds like the ex-teacher is learning a lot. What advice could you give people trying to find their purpose later in their lives?
A: Be honest with yourself. See what you really love the most and point yourself in that direction. Whatever it is, pursue it, or else you’ll just sit back and watch TV. I’m no smarter than the people reading this. Once I got started, part of this was luck. It took on a life of its own, and I’m still rolling with it. I’ve learned to respect my ideas more than I used to. You gain confidence when you’re successful at something new. Age has its rewards, as long as you keep healthy, try to look forward, and be encouraged by life. You have a story to tell. When you put out good stuff, good stuff comes back.

“Be honest with yourself. See what you really love the most and point yourself in that direction.”
Jana Lynne Sanchez loved working and traveling in Europe while running her PR agency. But, a drive to reconnect with her community led her to return home and run for Congress.
Jana Lynne Sanchez
Age: 53
Home: Waxahachie, TX
Purpose: Representing others to bring about positive change in her community.

Q: What were you doing before you decided to run for Congress?
A: I ran a PR agency with my partners. I was living quite a glamorous life based in London and Amsterdam: eating in amazing restaurants, taking holidays to the south of Italy, flying home to Texas on weekends. I loved the work, loved my business, but basically got homesick. I was looking for more—a better connection with community and family. I moved back to the town where I grew up to start a communications training company.

Q: As a first-timer, what made you throw your hat into the ring?
A: I’m a redneck Latina, so I wanted to hang out, play country music with my band, and by the way, build my new business. Then came election night, and I decided that if I was going to make change, I needed to be a part of the process. The next morning, I called someone I had fundraised with and asked her what I could do to make a difference—to have some skin in the game. I thought I would be working behind the scenes, but she told me that I had to run for office. After looking at a number of possible races, I decided to run in the democratic primary in my home district. My district is pretty poor—18% of the constituents are homeless, and many of them are children of undocumented workers. I am driven to win, and to make an impact on my community by working to bring healthcare for all, reforming immigration laws, and focusing on public education.

Q: What are the biggest challenges of running a campaign?
A: It’s much harder to raise money than I realized. It’s a hilarious idea—that we are calling at all hours to beg people to help me save this republic. But, we have a true sense of purpose together. Of course, it’s hard to find great staff and volunteers. But you keep going—the alternative is unthinkable.

Personally, I had to put off my dream of building a house on this beautiful piece of land where my grandparents settled. I’m basically working 24/7 right now. I went from being a runner, careful about what I ate, to going all out on my mission—and of course, missing meals and shoving burgers down my face in the process! I sleep only four hours a night. But in the end, I know it will be worth it.

Q: Not everyone can run for Congress. What have you learned that you can pass on to others seeking a new purpose?
A: You may not realize it, but you probably have skills that are very applicable to a different career. For instance, I have fundraising and communications skills for waging a campaign for public office. I’ve used my research experience as a former journalist to figure out our policy positions. Having a great story to tell and communicating it well will also help you in transition. If you can, bring along colleagues who understand and support your passion. I’m working with 28 other women who are running for office, most for the first time. We support each other emotionally and with skills and knowledge. Mostly we say, “Wow, we can’t believe all the exciting things happening for us.” We’re really killing it! I’ve still made huge mistakes, but I’ve learned you can’t be afraid to make a mistake or it will never happen. A lot of people say I’m crazy to give up my career for this, but I would absolutely do it all over again. I know I’ve found my true calling in life.
Stuart Siegel used his creativity to design marketing pieces for big-name brands before rediscovering an old passion for photography and turning it into a new career.
Stuart Siegel  
Age: 67  
Home: Walpole, MA  
Purpose: Turning his passion for photography into a second career.

Q: What kind of work did you do for Staples?  
A: When you walked in the store, you saw my work. I did a lot of what we call point of purchase, which is the signage you see in the aisles and the packaging on the products themselves. I was also designing web advertising. It wasn't something that I did because it allowed me to be truly creative in any way. It was only a job. Before that, I worked at an agency designing things like the Keurig Coffee logo.

Q: What compelled you to set up your own commercial photography studio this late in the game?  
A: I minored in photography in school. I thought I'd be a professional and even apprenticed with a photographer in New York. But, when I found out it was going to cost thousands of dollars to open a studio, I realized I couldn't do it. I couldn't afford it with two little kids in the house and a mortgage to pay. It was just too risky.

When I retired a year after my wife did, I'd paid off my mortgage and the kids' colleges and didn't have any big expenses anymore. I found very reasonable space in an old mill building and bought camera equipment and lighting. I still asked myself if this was a crazy, stupid thing to do. But it felt nice to be in the driver's seat.

Q: But, you weren't starting exactly from scratch, were you?  
A: No, I snuck in some photography at Staples. We were hiring outside photographers, and I set up a camera in my basement with a couple of lights. At first, they didn't realize that I had shot it myself. But, it was pretty good work. When they found out, they were very happy, but it wasn't part of my job description.

Q: You specialize in what's called tabletop photography. What is that?  
A: It's basically product photography. I don't shoot people. I like having complete control over something. It's almost like being an artist and having a canvas in front of you. The subject might be pens or a wine glass. You can do things with lighting, arranging, and props that make it kind of fun.

Q: How would you advise people who feel an urge to try out a creative business after a career that's "just a job"?  
A: Give it a chance or don't. But if you don't do it, you risk sitting at home playing checkers with yourself. Just make sure you research it thoroughly, so you're totally comfortable with it, and make sure you've covered your business end. Talk to people who've been doing it. See what the competition is—can you compete with people out there already? I went for a couple of months when no one called me. But then, it just took off. The biggest compliment is when a client says they can't wait to see my next photo.

I would consider myself more of a craftsman than a super-creative. The challenge is to take the most mundane thing and make it beautiful and interesting. I'm always trying to improve and feel I am as much or more creative than ever before. It's hard to believe at my age, but believe it. I have so much more experience, so I know what works. So far, so good. Knock on wood.
Kelly Hoey was a corporate lawyer for more than a decade before she realized that her passion lay in helping other people realize their dreams.
FROM LEGAL EAGLE TO HELPING OTHERS SOAR

Kelly Hoey
Age: 53
Home: New York, NY
Purpose: Inspiring clients to dream big and pursue fulfilling encore careers.

Q: At age 51, you quit your law job and plunged into a dream career. How did you go about doing that?

A: I was a corporate lawyer for over ten years and considered myself successful, with the ambition to move to that big corner office in the big glass tower. I thought there was only one roadmap for me: do a good job, keep my head down, and work my way up the ladder. But while I loved law at first, after a time, I realized it just wasn't feeding my soul. While I kept practicing, at the same time, I was frequently asked to help other people network their dreams—to give their goals and ambition wings. Two authors sent me flowery emails saying they needed my perspective for their books. I said, “Hold on here, maybe I should write it myself.” As soon as I told my network I wanted to write the book, the curtain parted immediately.

Q: What were some of the obstacles?

A: The biggest doubter was my 24-year-old self. I questioned my ability to write and whether or not I’d have anything to say. I saw that I had been delaying laying a foundation. So, I started to blog and write a newsletter, and people would email me unexpectedly that they looked forward to what I had to say. That naturally encouraged me. It helped me change my mindset so I could see myself more as a writer and not as an attorney.

Q: How did you lay the financial groundwork for the opportunity?

A: It’s not just about building your expertise and your network—you have to build your bank account. When I had financial breathing room, I could really put my ideas out there and advocate strongly for myself. What’s the worst thing someone was going to do, fire me? My rent’s paid. If you want to not have gremlins holding you back, get this piece in order. A lot of older people ratchet up their lifestyle too much and turn money into shackles. So, decide on the life you want to live, and make the smart financial choices to support it.

Q: What’s your best advice, networking and otherwise, for people seeking encore careers later in life?

A: In encore careers, more often than not, people already have some idea of what they want to do next but haven’t laid the groundwork. They want to be executive director of a nonprofit but have never worked in one. So, add your interest to your roster of current activities. Build your expertise. What’s the knowledge you need? And, build your network. Networking gets a bad name because we think of it as a schmoozy, cocktail-party activity. It’s really what you do every day and not just narrowly in your own industry. How do you greet someone when you go to the community center or church? Who do you congratulate on Facebook or LinkedIn? People forget that there is power in broad and shallow ties—on a committee or volunteer group or PTA, even talking with your hairdresser or barber. You must pop out and share your goals and ambitions in every sector of your life. Who knows what may bubble up? You can finally have the career you were meant to have.

“You must pop out and share your goals and ambitions in every sector of your life. Who knows what may bubble up?”
Learn how discovering your purpose can help you create a more meaningful second story. Visit the Jackson Financial Freedom Studio.

financialfreedomstudio.com

Committed to helping people pursue financial freedom, so they can live the life they love.