

It was in this company that I learned the impact of environment. The right surroundings, the right energy in the atmosphere, can bring joy even to a repetitive task. I found myself bringing aspects of that environment home to share with my husband, kids, and friends. This new facet of my life added a layer of excitement and fulfillment to a life already filled with love and joy.

My family was supportive of this new chapter in my life. We hired a housekeeper to handle the household chores so that my time at home could be spent with my family.

Hawthorne/Stone ran on a win/win culture. The company only hired people who fit their vision, which gave the staff a deep sense of cohesion and belonging. It suited my gentle, soft-spoken nature. Here, my tendency to reach out to people worked beautifully because the company spirit was all about relationships and accountability. We were not only making a lot of money, we were also forging bonds and changing lives. I learned that if you have a vision, it's important to make it visible, to put it out where others can see it, to have everything about you speak who you are and what you stand for.

Within a span of four years, I'd gone from shy housewife to business executive.

It felt *great* to experience this success. It also changed the dynamics back at home. I remember sitting at dinner one night when my parents were visiting, talking excitedly to my dad about my job, while Don, who was into exotic cooking, discussed new dishes he'd created with my mom. Our housekeeper, overhearing our apparent role reversals, gave us a quizzical look. Don and I looked at each other and burst out laughing.

My experience at Hawthorne/Stone opened the door for a flood of success that followed. Because so many people were eager to work there, Marshall Thurber, a partner at Hawthorne/Stone, brought up the idea of creating a business school that would teach