

Book Journeys Author Interview – Apr. 23, 2015
Dr. Angela Lauria with Dr. Joan Steidinger, author of *Sisterhood in Sports: How Female Athletes Collaborate and Compete*

Get really focused on your subject. Make it manageable and not too big. ~Dr. Joan Steidinger

Angela:

Well hey everybody! We are back at Book Journeys Radio. I'm so excited to have you back here. Today's episode is a really special one. I am excited to introduce you to Dr. Joan Steidinger. She is the author of *Sisterhood in Sports: How Female Athletes Collaborate and Compete*. And I'm really excited to talk to her. We're gonna talk to her about her book and why she wrote it, and we'll also be talking about some of the ways that she has gone about promoting it. So you'll get lots of great ideas that you can apply on your book journey by learning from her. I think it is so important to learn from people who went before us. So Joan, Dr. Steidinger, thank you so much for being with us.

Joan:

Well, I'm happy to be here.

Angela:

Terrific. Well, tell us about *Sisterhood in Sports*. What's the book about and why did you write it?

Joan:

The book is about what drives the female athlete--intimate and emotional conversation, bonding, close bonding, a sense of community, intuitiveness of women, and female collaborative competition. I chose this subject many years ago. ... in the late '80s there was a book that came out. It was called *Women Who Loved Too Much* and it was really basically putting down women for being too focused on relationships emotionally. And as I saw more and more women in my practice, both athletic and non-athletic women, all they took was on relationships from an emotional perspective. And I became, it became clear to me that this wasn't a problem. It's just that people didn't understand women very well. And so I came up with the idea of writing this book back in 1994 and I wrote my first proposal in 1997. And my first title of my very first proposal that actually was the one that I turned in to a bunch of publishers in '97, was called *Running Up Mountains*, which is very appropriate because that's what I have done for years and still do. But it probably was rejected by all the people I handed it out to and I kinda went back to the drawing board and the next year what I did was interview 40 ultra running women 'cause I was very involved in the ultra running world and I kept seeing that pattern of, you know, women focusing on relationships emotionally, 'cause that, I didn't exactly mention but that is actually a very big part of the book as well, and really the motivation behind it. So I stayed with the idea, things happened in my life that kinda geared me away from writing it although I was still always talking to women about this issue. And then finally and unfortunately, in 2003 I had a general bike accident which derailed me for a couple of years. And in 2009, my husband suggested, "Well, if you really wanna write this book ('cause I was still talking of books), why don't you join up with writers' groups and really work on it?" And that's exactly what I've done. And here we are.

Angela:

Wow! And so when was this book published?

Joan:

It was just released in October of 2014.

Angela:

Wow, congratulations!

Joan:

Thank you.

Angela:

So it was a, you know, roughly ten-year, oh wait, twenty-year journey from when you got the idea until you finished your book. Is there anything that, now that it's been published, is there anything you wish you knew, maybe something that would have helped you finish it sooner or something you would have done differently?

Joan:

Uhm, I actually don't think so because part of the issue was that it wasn't time for this kind of book to be written. And even now, there's still a tremendous amount of resistance even though this book, psychological and neuropsychological research included within the context of the book, uhm, it's still a topic the public has trouble with. There's something that is troublesome, you know, there's a move on to make men and women the same and our minds work very differently. And there's been, you know, as I said, there's been lots of research done in the brain and really highlighting and talking about the differences between male and female brains. And I think it's a misnomer in the world not to think of men's and women's brains as being the same because the way they work is quite a bit different. And there's nothing wrong with that, you know, it doesn't make one better or worse. It just means they're different but a lot of people seem to have problem with the concept of "different."

Angela:

Mmm, interesting. And so what are some of the things that you learned in your journey of getting your book written and published that have been the most powerful for you? What are some of the things that either changed for you or that you learned during this process?

Joan:

Well, I have to say the last, the years since 2009 have been rather remarkable. I've had more support for women about my writing than I've ever had in my entire life. And one of the things I was having difficulty with over this time was changing from academic writing to general audience because I felt this should be a general audience book so I, you know, be able to read from high school level on up. And so I've been joining writers' groups and then publishing in their onsite uhm, on their website and having one woman, Linda Watanabe McFerrin, invite me to her advanced writers' group helped provide a lot of confidence for me in terms of my writing really having the potential to actually be a traditionally published book. My goal has always been to have a traditionally published book because I feel with traditionally published books, you'll have to be held to a much higher standard of writing. And so that was, you know, some of the, I was not willing to compromise and go for self-publishing or a high-breed of that model. And so I had one woman after another support my writing and when I did sit down to write the book, I had 8 females or readers of the book, and 4 were athletic and 4 were non-athletic. And these women really helped carry me through, but, and also I had a tremendously good book coach and inevitably ended up with a terrific editor. But the book coach, my biggest problem is I tend to be kind of ADD in a sense, but I persist. That's the key for me and this book process. It's my

willingness to persist and she just helped me get organized better. Uhm, and then I was really able to write a really good proposal. In fact my agent had gotten one proposal two years previous with a different kind of book coach and he rejected it. And I thought I'd gotten to the point where I didn't take it personally. And then later on, he heard the book coach I was working with, that she's kinda tough, 'cause I didn't think she was tough, I thought she was terrific and Brooke, her name is Brooke Warner. And so three years later I handed him back the final proposal three years ago and the next morning he calls me on my way into work to say, "Don't let anybody else have it because I really want this book. And he was terrific, he was actually the person who suggested that I put in more of the neurological research and the brain stuff. And so he's one of these agents that will really work with his authors to help improve their proposal to make it, you know, appeal-, more appealing to publishers and it was ...

Angela:

So how did you find your agent? What was your process for that?

Joan:

Oh, I went all over the place. Uhm, I went through the book, God I can't remember the name of the book, there's this annual book that comes out that lists agents and their specialties and where they're located. So I went through the whole, that whole book and wrote down people to send to several years ago. And I also went repeatedly to pitching events, you know, or conferences where they had pitches made to agents and to publishers both. And I did that for, I don't know, three years, four years. And what was interesting is, I always, I'm a good pitch maker so people wanted to see my proposal, but then before, when it was more disorganized, then they, you know, turned it down. So I just got so I could be articulate enough as well as focused and organized enough to be able to come up with a good proposal. But it wasn't an easy process. I mean it takes time, it takes diligence, it takes learning and not personalize your rejections which women often do, and it was uhm, I'm a very determined and persistent person but, and I work hard. So those are my qualities, I think, that helped me actually get this book published. And now it's the publisher confers it's a successful book and he's gonna quite likely put it into paperback.

Angela:

Okay, so let's just go backwards for a second. So about how many agents do you think you spoke to before you found your agent? And about how long of a time period was that?

Joan:

Oh heavens, uhm, I think I'd pitched for about three years and I probably pitched to twenty to thirty agents.

Angela:

And how did you know the agent that you picked was right for you? Was it a gut feeling or was there that he worked on similar books? What made you think, *yes, this is the right person to work with?*

Joan:

Well, I'll tell you first and foremost, he's very smart and he has a wonderful sense of humor. And he's very down-to-earth, although he is, can be also very serious and, you know, he gets things done. He's the former owner of Cody's Books in Berkeley which was a pretty well-known bookstore, and who became an agent. And I watched a colleague of mine with him around her book and I just liked the interaction that was there. And I liked, uhm, his level of persistence was

quite amazing. And so I wanted, you know, somebody hard-working, persistent, really liking my project, uhm, and we just clicked, quite frankly.

Angela:

So once you said yes and you had the proposal in his hands and a contract for him to represent you, what was the process to find your publisher?

Joan:

Uhm, well, what he did is he had his list of connections with publishers and started sending it out. I actually finished my proposal to his liking when I was at a writer's retreat in Hawaii two years ago. And it was so great 'cause I was at the retreat, probably four days into the six-day retreat and it got done after 10 hours of work that day. And it was great to get all this support, you know, from the writers of the retreat. And so it was really, it was in his hands at that point. He did the pitching, he did the list, you know, we got, you know, lots of rejections. You know, he had a AB and C list, uhm, and then he finally said, "How badly do you really wanna write this book?" And I said, "Very badly." And so he got into the A list, left his B list, and ended up with a T list of publishers, and found somebody who was interested and paid a small advance.

Angela:

And did you consider self-publishing? I know you talked about that a little before that you had kind of worked it out but...

Joan:

Never.

Angela:

Never.

Joan:

Never. Never for me because I like, it's the story of my life. I want to do the best I can do and I think by going to a traditional publisher, it made me improve my writing so well. I've now won, the book has won first place in the fourth category in the Beverly Hills Book Awards and it's a finalist in Foreword Reviews' INDIEFAB Book of the Year Awards in the women's category. There's six of us and at the end of June they'll announce the gold, the silver, and the bronze winners. And I actually am entered into three more contests so I was surprised and...

Angela:

And so, yeah. Let's go back, we'll talk about the awards a little more in a second but I just wanna go back to once you were signed on with your publisher, what was the process to go from that proposal to the finished published book? How long did it take and what was that relationship like?

Joan:

Well, I had an editor. It was a good thing I was in a very good place emotionally because I had an editor, a female editor who, I would say one thing and she would take the opposite stance. It was, it was, and she was, her emails were often accusatory and unpleasant. But what I did is I met with my book coach. We outlined, we put an outline, they gave me, uhm, let's see, from August until my manuscript was due April 1st with everything, which was pretty fast turnaround. But what my book coach and I did was we, she helped me lay out a plan for finishing each chapter and that included in the middle of that, ah, those months is, I went to Nepal and ran a

race and ran on a track till that knocked out six weeks in the middle of everything 'cause actually the race that I ran in Nepal was so hard it knocked me out for, I don't know, probably three weeks after I got back in terms of recovery. So really, I consider that I wrote the book in like about six months, uhm, and you know, I'd done interviews. I had done, in recent years, I'd done 85 tiny interviews with women and a few with men, male coaches. Uhm, I laid out time during my week of when I would write. I cut back my practice. I'm a clinical and sports psychologist and I stuck to the plan. And so I wrote Thursdays and Fridays and on the weekends, and that was pretty much my life. That was very focused, I can be very focused and so I went one chapter at a time. And if I needed a couple interviews here and there, I went out and interviewed people. But most of my time spent from, I don't know, mid to late August to first of April was focused on getting that book done. And then either doing...

Angela:

And then it took from April until October for the publishing, right?

Joan:

Yes.

Angela:

Uhm, what did you do...

Joan:

And I will say when I turned the manuscript in, it was so well-edited, they did very little to no editing.

Angela:

Oh, that's nice.

Joan:

Yeah.

Angela:

So uhm, so tell me, what did you do to prepare for your launch between April and October?

Joan:

Uhm, well, I knew I was supposed to get on promotions right away. One of the things that I've always done in my practice was be a really good marketer and done PR early, in my early years, not as much ... I knew I had to make contact with places early on to do presentations and hired a publicist who turns out as a very sweet, lovely woman and I should have stayed with her, but I had her for two and a half months. And then money was really tight 'cause my practice was so low from writing my book. And uhm, so I laid out a whole plan on marketing. Since October, oh and one of the things the publisher did that really messed up my online marketing was, my release date forever was November, supposed to be November 14th I think it was. And so my whole, my planning was around that date. And so I had all these presentations lined up in November/December and what happened is, all of a sudden the executive editor of ... is calling me October 1st and he's just trying to do an interview with me and I said, "God, you know, you're doing it pretty early." And he goes, "Well, your book is going out October 14th." I'm like, "What?"

Angela:
Hmm. Hmm, surprise!

Joan:
So without ... Yeah, right! Without the energy and I was planning to spend the next month on getting the social media stuff together. So uhm, what was, one good thing that did happen though, 'cause I have, had built up good networks in the Bay areas for, one way or another, was I had contact at CBS5 here in the Bay area and they had a space for me four days before my book was released. You know, at Bay Sunday, which is a general artsy, newbie talk show interview program. So I regrouped very quickly and got on this program and I didn't get, I didn't have a publicist at this point. I got on the show by myself through my connection. And then sort of moving venues up, and then at some point I thought I wanted to try get regional and national exposure so I hired a more expensive publicist. ... hired a more expensive publicist and she didn't get the national and some of the regional I had hoped for but a lot of the venues, I don't know, probably two-thirds of what I did, uhm what I, are venues I located myself. And uhm, so that next, calling, begging people, calling, begging people, calling.

Angela:
Haha!

Joan:
And part of the problem with my book is, it's academic scholar, they don't make it really affordable or reasonable for bookstores to purchase. So it can basically, it's only being sold on Amazon at this point. Uhm, you know, hopefully...

Angela:
And we should mentioned that the book is actually called *Sisterhood in Sports* and you can get that book by Dr. Joan Steidinger on Amazon. So definitely check that out if you are an athlete or even interested in women and competition and how women's brains are different than men's brains. So *Sisterhood in Sports: How Female Athletes Collaborate and Compete*. Just make sure we get that in there so people know to check that out. So you prepped for your launch, your book launch, a little earlier than expected and uhm, and after your launch, what kind of, what are some of the big before and after, some of the best things that have happened for you since the book came out? It sounds like you've done a bunch of media stuff which is awesome. Any other things that have come out of being an author for you?

Joan:
Well, I am getting more sports ... class which is a good thing. And I have been working at ... with the softball team and now the athletic director is looking at me as possibly coming on and working with, you know, all the women teams. So that would be a terrific outcome as far as I'm concerned.

Angela:
And were those the types of goals that you had for your book when you started the project or was it more just about getting the message out?

Joan:
Well, I would say it was more about just getting the message out on a more national and global scale and getting more business was a secondary goal.

Angela:

Excellent. So what is the, what is the advice you give to people? I'm sure people have asked you about having your own book. What advice do you give to people who want to have a book? What do you think are the things that make a difference between actually getting it done and just talking about it? So you've been on both sides of that equation, having spent 20 years working on this book. What do you think are the big differences?

Joan:

Uhm, get really focused on your subject. Make it manageable and not too big. Figure out if there's a ... target audience for your subject and begin doing some outlines of what you'd like to do to organize talks and the process you'd like to convey to readers.

Angela:

Yeah, fantastic advice. You can learn more about Dr. Joan Steidinger at powerzonephd.com and you can pick up a copy of her book, *Sisterhood in Sports* on amazon.com. So Dr. Steidinger thank you so much for being with us and sharing your book journey with us.

Joan:

Thank you. ...

Angela:

Thank you so much. So you can check out our sister show ^PageUp^ for more advice and techniques and tools to write and publish and promote your book. Just go to pageuppodcast.com or go to iTunes to subscribe to that. If you are not subscribed to Book Journeys Radio, make sure that you do go ahead and subscribe on iTunes and review us as well because it helps more authors in transformation like you to find the advice that really might take them over the edge from just talking about their book to actually getting it out there and making a difference. And as always, we will be back at Book Journeys Radio where we're changing the world, one book at a time.