

A Dream Come True

Ever wonder what it's like to savor a dream come true? I'm doing it right now. It's nearly 2 a.m. and I'm sitting in my studio, *my room*, listening to a CD featuring the Emotions. It's Monday...I've come a long way in a short time, but here I am, doing what I love in a room especially set aside for this creative process.

I don't have any furniture in here yet. Some of the books from my personal library line the walls of this *finished room over the garage*, or *FROG*, as it is commonly called. They're on wooden shelving measuring 12' x 4' and supported by ten pound cinder blocks that cost \$1.27 each. I've decorated my room with items that have deeply personal meaning for me. They include the first framed piece of artwork given to me by my parents, many years ago; a quilted arras made just for this room by my friend and sister, Carol Austin Gordon; a lavender ceramic plate with my daughter's right hand imprinted on it. She was seven years old when she made it. There's also a framed Certificate of Recognition acknowledging me as an Outstanding Mom, colored and signed by this same little girl.

There are plants, commemorative plates from trips we made while living in England, paintings, lithographs and family photos. I even have two gold plated dishes from my maternal grandparents' fiftieth wedding anniversary. I inherited them from my grandfather. Truth is, my Mother insisted on giving them to me so I dutifully accepted and put them away, indifferent to their meaning and significance for many years. Some of my vintage collection of 45-rpm records also adorn this room.

I still have my old entertainment center, dating from the early eighties. You know the kind, set up to hold the turntable on the top and the tuner on a separate shelf, with space for record albums underneath. It even has a glass door. There are some record albums stored inside. To add accent, I covered it with two double bed flat sheets of contrasting colors and put a majestic looking plant, whose name I don't know, on top. A plastic computer table covered with two tablecloths holds a peace lily and a gorgeous multicolored ivy, both in decorative pottery planters. They complement family photos, a ceramic red and white bell that reads, "*I Love You Mom*," and a small dish of potpourri. I'm sitting on one of three Haitian pillows that cost about five bucks apiece. This is my little piece of heaven and here I am writing about it. Wow, this is awesome! And I am so very blessed.

Some of the books I have in this room date from my childhood, *Alfred Hitchcock's Ghostly Gallery*, for example and include my daily journals. I've chronicled my life off and on since I was fourteen years old. These diaries span the past sixteen years. I've read most of the books in here, and can point to the ones with special meaning. My parents gave me Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* and *Eight Cousins* as well as an early biography of Jacqueline Kennedy by Gordon Langley Hall and Ann Pinchot. My late Godmother and namesake, Theresa Martha Neely Calhoun, gave me her copies of Lewis Carroll's *Alice In Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*. The titles are eclectic: they include history, biography, fiction, politics, mysteries, and art. I've got the complete works of William Shakespeare in a fancy leather bound book, a three volume set of the short stories of John Steinbeck, books by Maya Angelou, Gloria Naylor,

Angela Davis and Elaine Brown. And the collection changes regularly. Since I love to read, any book that really speaks to me ends up in *my room*. It's my way of expressing myself.

Ah, my choice of reading material, as with my writing, probably defines me in ways I can't imagine. Yet, just a few years ago, writing was not on my list of career choices. It wasn't something I had ever thought seriously about pursuing. I didn't think of it as a means of paying the house note, if you get my drift. In retrospect, I know now that I wasn't ready. We moved to North Carolina in the fall of 1996 so I could take a position in my field, urban and regional planning, with a local government entity. I quit after thirteen months, exhausted, miserable and badly shaken by the experience. My next job was just awful, if not worse. I was anxious to get back to work, in a *professional* capacity and so much so that I jumped feet first into something that proved to be equally as nettlesome as what I'd just left. I failed to heed warning signals flashing around me. However, despite a second unhappy go round, I believe this was the process required to bring me to my life's passion and my true calling.

Had things worked out the way I wanted them to, I'd still be a practicing planner writing formulaic staff reports, documents totally devoid of feeling. Divine intervention turned my world upside down, and I'm truly thankful. I began writing as a means of dealing with the disappointment, stress and misery I felt about my life, particularly my career choices. I did a guest columnist stint for a newspaper owned by friends in California. Eventually I began doing freelance pieces for a local paper. I was buoyed by the positive feedback and success of my efforts. I was even getting paid!!! To deal with the frustration and chaos of my current day job, I started writing short stories. I discovered I liked it. My transition from land use planner and frustrated *professional* to writer – *with a room of my own* – was gradual. I am a firm believer that one *grows* into her or his true vocation, evolving constantly, though not necessarily consistently. There are missteps, false starts, digressions, and lots of soul searching even when you know it's meant to be!

So here I am, sitting in *my room*, relishing a dream come true. Yes, here I am, celebrating a dream come true, not with much fanfare, in my nightshirt and bare feet. Somehow this seems far more fitting. And, this much I do know: don't give up on your dreams – they're the fuel that powers our fantasies. Realizing my dream has profoundly changed my life. Writing about it in *my room* is just so cool. *Savoring and celebrating a dream come true: oh how sweet it is.*