

## Chapter 1

### Do What You Love

*I know what a good strawberry is. It seems as if I've always known this. Some people have a sophisticated palate that can pick out a true French pâté or Russian caviar, but my talent is a little more down-home. I just know what makes a good strawberry.*

*Strawberries have a perfect shape. They look like hearts, complete with a pointy bottom and little dip at the top. We all know what hearts symbolize: love and romance. There's nothing more important than love.*

*Strawberries are the perfect size for pleasurable eating, naturally bite-sized. You don't have to slice them or dice them, chop them or smash them—although you sure can if you want to, because there's nothing so versatile as a strawberry.*

*Look at the seeds dotting the strawberry, lined up in perfect symmetry in a repeating V pattern, as amazing as a spider's web. The seeds are tiny enough not to get stuck in your teeth, as raspberry seeds often do. Did you know there's an average of 200 seeds per strawberry? The reason I know this is that I once asked this question on my radio show, and a man called in and said his sons counted the seeds. Now that's dedication. Of course, I was offering a box of gourmet dipped berries as a prize, so they had some big motivation. It just goes to show what people will do for a strawberry.*

*Nothing is quite as red as a ripe strawberry. You might even say it's the perfect red. Pick up a ripe strawberry warm from the sun, and you can almost see the skin throbbing with the pressure of the red juice within. Bite into that strawberry and your lips and tongue (and if you're not careful, your chin) will glow as if you have just eaten a red popsicle.*

*Strawberries smell like summer, even in the depths of winter. That's why they are so perfect for Valentine's Day and the winter holidays. We*

*smell that rich scent and it makes us remember lying lazily in the sun, covered with suntan lotion.*

*But of course the best thing about strawberries is their taste. Have you ever noticed that it is nearly impossible to describe a taste? You have to eat a strawberry to know what it tastes like. But here's a picture of taste: give a toddler his first strawberry. Watch him as his eyes grow big and wide, a grin spreads across his chubby cheeks, and red juice runs down his chin. Even if he can't talk to tell you he likes it, he doesn't have to. You already know.*

*Admit it; your mouth is watering right now. I hope you have some strawberries in the house. If not, I know where you can get some.*

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Okay, I admit it: I love strawberries. But so do lots of people. Yet not everyone gets to “do” strawberries every day, like me. When I go to work, I get to do something I love. How lucky is that?

I wish everybody could do what they love. Now I know this doesn't always seem possible. There are circumstances and situations where we have to do what we don't even *like* to do, much less love it. But maybe we can all try to do what we love, or at least love what we do. I mean, why else would we have been given a passion, if not to do something with it?

That sounds all fine and grand, but figuring out how to do what you love—and make money at it—isn't always that easy. When I was a little kid, I certainly didn't plan to become the “Strawberry Lady.” After all, what kind of a career objective is that?

But looking back, I can see there were many hints.

### *Playing What You Love*

I was a chubby little girl. My mom says you couldn't even see my neck until I was two. My most noticeable feature was my fat little cheeks. I was also a happy kid, always talking (too much, according to my sister) and laughing. And I loved to eat, as long as I got to eat what I liked. Don't get me started on green vegetables. I never liked them, and I never will.

One of my earliest memories is accompanying my dad out to the

strawberry patch in our backyard. I was so young that I couldn't pronounce the word "strawberries"; I called them "too-beh-weez." (I had trouble with Rs and Ss, so with a name like Shari I was in trouble.) Dad went out to work in the garden, and I went out to eat berries. My mom sent me out with a bucket to fill with strawberries, so she could make strawberry pie. I loved her pies, but the lure of fresh-off-the-vine strawberries was too much to resist. So I developed a simple system: one for the bucket, two for me to eat right then and there.

Why did I like strawberries so much? I guess because they were sweet and beautiful, and they seemed to make people happy when they ate one. I've always liked for everyone around me to be happy. I hate conflict and arguing. And yet, I was always getting into some mischief or other, because of my constant search for fun and more fun.

Another thing I loved was giving gifts, even when I was very small. I liked getting them too, but I liked giving them better. Christmas, therefore, was my favorite holiday. I started planning for Christmas in October. When I was really young, I would make gifts for my family and special friends all by myself, typical childlike things, and then I would spend hours wrapping those silly little gifts in bright and colorful wrappings and ribbons until they were a wonder to behold, at least to my eyes. I kept these gifts stashed under my bed for months, periodically taking them out, gloating over their beauty, and fantasizing about how much people were going to love them.

Christmas Eve was my favorite day of the whole year, because that was when I brought out my gifts from under the bed and put them under the tree. When someone opened his or her gift, I was practically sitting on top of them I was so excited. I've got to say they were kind to me, much kinder than I deserved, since I was such an in-your-face little kid. I was the youngest in the family, with one sister and three stepbrothers, and it must have been tempting for them make fun of my presents. But they didn't. They smiled and said *ooh* and *aah* and made me feel great.

One year, when I was about eight or nine, I had saved up enough money during the year to actually *buy* Christmas presents for everyone. This was a big deal for me. I bought everyone their favorite candy bar. I studied each of my brothers, sister, mom, and dad to make sure I knew which candy bar they liked best. I saved enough of my weekly allowance money to buy one candy bar each week, until I had a candy bar for everyone. I even bought a Giant Tootsie Roll

for one of my brothers because he liked them. Yuck! I thought it was a waste of money, but I gritted my teeth and bought it anyway. Then I went crazy with wrapping the candy bars. By the time I got through with those packages, no one could have guessed there was just a candy bar inside.

Even at that young age, I saved my money. I had a feel for money; I liked the way it added up over time. From the time I was so young I couldn't say the word "strawberries," I knew that two for me and one for the bucket was a winning strategy. The bucket was where you put your dreams for tomorrow, and not just your own dreams, but dreams for other people. It always gave me a thrill to put my own money, even if it was just a quarter, into the collection plate at church every Sunday. I'd think of what good things that quarter would buy, and I'd sit in the pew and grin.

When my girlfriend Sharon would come over to my house, one of our favorite things to play was A&W. There was a swimming pool in our backyard, surrounded by a brick barbeque and kitchen area. Sharon and I pretended it was our own A&W restaurant. I cooked fake burgers and poured fake root beer, while she took orders from our imaginary customers and called them out to me. The "customers" raved over my cooking, of course, and gave us big tips. The end of the game was counting out our fake money, which we did quite seriously. This game had everything I liked—giving people what they liked, making good things to eat, and money.

### *Practicing What You Love*

Playing A&W was good training for my first real job, when I was in high school. I worked in a little burger shop—and when I say little, I mean little. It was little even by Klamath Falls standards, basically a box that only two people could fit into at once. I worked the front, taking orders, making drinks, handing over the food, and collecting the money. Maybe not everyone would love this kind of work, but I did. It was playing A&W for real—and making real money too. I could hardly wait to get out of school each day so I could go to work.

To be honest, I loved this job not only because of the work but because it was a popular hangout for some really cute boys. This was where I met my future husband, Clay. He used to come by the burger

shop and order chocolate-peanut butter-banana milkshakes from me. He said my milkshakes were the best he'd ever had. I thought he was gorgeous and super cool—four years older than me and with a reputation for giving the best parties in town. I had a reputation as a party girl (it was well deserved—I loved parties), so I figured we were a perfect match.

My next job was a part-time seasonal one, gift wrapping presents at a department store during the holiday season of my senior year in high school. I loved this job too. It was almost as fun as wrapping Christmas presents for my family. We had three different kinds of wrapping paper with matching bows, and strict directions to keep the bows together with the correct paper. After a while, I got bored and decided to mix it up. I didn't ask anyone if I could; I just did it. I like to ask for forgiveness rather than permission, you know? I think of this as pushing the envelope, although I guess some people might say I just like to make mischief. But I *knew* how to wrap gifts. I didn't need or want a list of rules. I always aimed for my packages to be unique, maybe even surprising. The customers loved what I did with those papers and bows. And I loved handing them a sensational package and hearing them say, "Wow!"

### *Knowing What You Don't Love*

Although I loved my gift-wrapping job, especially after I started wrapping the way I wanted to, I still remember an incident that even today makes me cringe. I had just finished wrapping a package with red and white paper and a green bow—*not* the way we were supposed to do it—when the general manager happened to walk through the back, where we were working. She picked up my package and demanded, "Who wrapped this ugly thing?"

I just wilted. I have been accused of being too sensitive, and it is true. If somebody looks at me cross-eyed, I turn into mush. I don't have a tough skin. (This is why I could never be in politics.)

My boss tossed my green-bow package on the table and snapped, "Fix it!" I went home feeling absolutely wrecked. To this day I hate green ribbons and bows. We don't use green ribbon in my company, ever. I don't even like the color green. That extends to green vegetables—I can only eat salad if it's slathered in dressing and cheese—and

as for green beans, forget about it. The only exception I can think of is money—I do like greenbacks!

Silliness aside, sometimes it's just as instructive to know what you hate as what you love. I hate argument and conflict. I'll go a long way to avoid them. It's good to know this about myself.

### *Trying What Others Love*

I think what I really wanted when I grew up was to make my mom proud of me. Her approval was what drove me to get good grades, and make first flute in the school orchestra, and win all the prizes I could. I never wanted to hurt Mom's feelings or upset her. Today she says I was a perfect angel, so I guess I succeeded.

Of course, I wasn't a perfect angel. I was just careful not to get caught doing anything she might not approve of. The only time I remember getting in trouble with Mom was when I got home late from a party one night during high school. It was a school night, and I was supposed to be home by ten. The party was at Clay's house, one of his famous parties with lots of popular kids. Oh, I was so madly in love with him, and how could I leave the party to get home by ten, just like a little kid? At ten I called Mom and said I was on my way. At eleven I called and told her the same thing. At twelve I finally headed home. I tiptoed into the house with my shoes off, and there she was sitting on the couch waiting for me. I don't remember what she said. I do remember how she looked at me—and how ashamed I felt for making her upset.

Mom held various jobs outside the home, but I think she was most proud of being a homemaker. Although I admired her, I didn't want to be a homemaker. I did want to be a wife and mom someday, but I wanted to be a rich and famous jet-setting mom, the kind who took my kids with me on trips and stayed at home with them when I felt like it. I wanted to do a lot of volunteer work at my church; throw great parties with lots of phenomenal food, where everyone laughed and had fun, especially me; and have enough money for me and my family so no one had to worry about it—plus enough money to give away.

That money thing was the kicker, of course. My parents weren't poor, but they were a long way from rich. I knew that if I wanted to

be “rich and famous” so Mom would be proud, I was going to have to make those riches myself.

The irony is that Mom was always proud of me. If I had told her that I wanted to be a strawberry dipper, she’d have backed me to the hilt. (Well, maybe she would have argued a little.) But there’s no way I would have ever planned to own a company that dips strawberries in chocolate. It’s funny now to think of all the worrying I did about what to be when I grew up. Really all we have to do is be patient and wait for God’s timing in our lives. There is never any need to panic and make bad decisions. But I didn’t know that then.

### *Dreaming of What You Love*

My first “real” career dream was of being a stewardess on a major airline, the kind of airline that flew to glamorous places like Paris or New York or Las Vegas. When I was eighteen, I actually got an interview with American Airlines. I had to send in photos along with my application; my mom took them and I looked just like a junior stewardess in my tailored suit. The one thing the photos didn’t show was how scared I was when I went up to Seattle for the interview. I was sure this was my destiny, and who wants to fail at their destiny?

I was wrong about it being my destiny, because I wasn’t accepted. It was a crushing disappointment, and a blow to my self-esteem as well as my career aspirations. But looking back, I’m glad they didn’t want me. I was interested only because it was a way to travel to exciting places. Now that I fly a lot, I know the reality of the job, and it doesn’t look that glamorous anymore. Pushing a cart down a cramped aisle and waiting on tired and demanding people would have driven me around the bend—especially nowadays, when flying is practically guaranteed to make people cranky!

Since I wasn’t going to be a stewardess after all, I enrolled at Lane Community College in Eugene, just a few hours north of Klamath Falls. Truthfully, I wasn’t that excited about going to college. I got good grades in school, all *As* and *Bs*, but education wasn’t something my parents pushed on us kids. None of my brothers or my sister went to college; some of them had trouble getting through high school. I basically went to college because I didn’t know what else to do with myself. My parents agreed to the deal I put forth—they’d pay my

tuition and some living expenses if I moved out of the house. They said okay because after raising five kids all their married life, they could finally be alone!

I had another reason for moving away from Klamath Falls. After going together for nearly two years, Clay had broken up with me, and my heart was in pieces. He wasn't a bad guy; he just wasn't ready to settle down. I tried to understand, but it still hurt a lot. In Klamath Falls everything reminded me of him, and since it was such a small place I was sure to run into him continually. I was looking for a new start and a chance to forget.

So there I was in college, accepting my parents' money and worrying about what I was going to do *now*. I liked selling, making money, giving gifts, and making people smile. Most of all I liked having fun. What I didn't know was how to put those things together. Actually I didn't know you *could* put them together—especially the fun part. It's not as if there was a major in chocolate-dipped strawberries. When I went home to visit, I'd sit in the kitchen with my mom and wonder aloud what I was going to do with my life. I hope I didn't bore her too much.

While in college I worked part time in the same department store where I'd wrapped gifts, only now I had been promoted to a salesperson in the women's clothing department. Since I love clothes, I was good at this. My customers liked me, and I liked helping them look good. The store ran promotions where we could earn special prizes or money for opening up charge accounts, and I nearly always won these promotions. I loved the job, but I knew it wasn't what I wanted to do forever.

### *Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places*

After two years and an associate degree, I left college. One reason was that I still wasn't any closer to figuring out what to do with my life, and school seemed like a waste of time. I wanted to *do* things, not just learn about things.

My oldest stepbrother, Rick, owned a mortgage firm in Southern California, and even though I was only twenty with absolutely no experience, Rick offered me a job as a mortgage broker. When I think now of his belief and trust in a very young and green rookie, I



am amazed. But of course, at twenty, we don't think of ourselves as young. And I had complete faith in my ability with numbers and my devotion to hard work. Besides, Rick said I could do it, so it never occurred to me to doubt it.

I did do well as a mortgage broker, in spite of my youth and newness to the industry. Rick was pleased with me, and I was pleased with my prestigious-sounding title and especially the money I was making. It was perfect timing for getting into the mortgage business. Mortgage rates had just plummeted, and everyone was either buying or refinancing. I'd be in the office some nights until after midnight, preparing my loan applications so they'd be on the top of the file for the processor in the morning. I was so busy I couldn't even find time to go to the bank and cash my paychecks.

I was named Rookie of the Year my first year. And it wasn't because I was the boss's sister, either. Rick has a driver personality, and I'm ultra-sensitive, so we clashed at times. But the bigger problem was that I wasn't having much fun. I liked dealing with money, because I was good at that, but there were precious few smiles coming my way. Fun is not a component of the mortgage business.

The most fun I had was hanging out with my sister-in-law Emily, an exceptional cook with her own successful catering business. She liked to have fun, just like me. She taught me how to make home-made holiday gift and food baskets. I made them up for the realtors who were my customers and delivered them personally to the real-estate offices. It was a great way to get business without having to play those "suck-up" games, which never seemed quite right to me.

The baskets included strawberries dipped in chocolate. The realtors went nuts over the baskets, and they especially loved those strawberries. Soon I branched out from Christmas baskets to other holidays or special occasions. I was pretty popular among the realtors, let me tell you. My competitors usually brought them stale doughnuts.

And it didn't just make them happy—it made me happy. When I entered a realtor's office, everybody would get up from their desks and swarm around me. They would be smiling, laughing, and joking around. And I never had to say a single boring mortgage word! It wasn't long before I was delivering berry baskets at least once a month—I didn't wait for holidays anymore. Those baskets were my signature marketing edge. Boy, did they work.

They took a lot of work too. I'd be up until two or three in the

morning sometimes, dipping those strawberries in chocolate—and loving it. It was such a release from the stress of the mortgage industry.

But after a few years as a mortgage broker, I still wasn't happy in my job, except when I was making or delivering strawberry baskets. I knew it was time to move on to something different, something more fun.

So where do you go for fun from L.A.? Where else but Mexico? I moved to Puerto Vallarta for five months and sold time-shares on the beach. I played a lot of cards, went out to eat every night, and laughed a lot. It was fun—but not very challenging. So when I got bored, I moved again, this time to Reno, which was closer to home. It was my plan to get a no-brainer job in this glittery town, while I contemplated my next move. I got a job as a photographer for the MGM casino's theater/nightclub, which I thought would be fun. But when I went to my uniform fitting and saw the skimpy short skirt I had to wear, I just couldn't do it. I may have been a girl who loved parties and was a bit of a ham, but I was a modest ham.

So I decided instead to get another prestigious job and make some good money. Again I jumped into an industry I knew little about. This time I became a stockbroker, encouraged by a woman stockbroker I had met who became one of my mentors. I did a crash course, passed my Series 6 and 7 exams, got my license, and was offered a job. I was the only woman and the youngest broker in my office. It was a little lonely—but Clay lived just over the hill in Sacramento!

He had recently moved away from Klamath Falls. I had kept track of him through my sister, Dayna, as they were friends. He had a good job as a swimming-pool contractor. Because we were so close, both away from our small-town roots, it was natural to connect again. I had never lost my feelings for him; no one I'd met in L.A. or Reno ever compared with him. And his feelings for me came back too. We dated back and forth from Reno to Sacramento for about nine months, until we decided our relationship would progress a little faster if we were planted in the same place. So I transferred to my company's Sacramento office.

I thought becoming a stockbroker would be a good move for me. I was good with money and curious about investments, and the title of stockbroker sounds so prestigious! (I was still under twenty-five and impressed by this.) Also I thought you had to work with money in order to make good money.

Well, I did make some money, although not nearly as much as I'd made as a mortgage broker, and my title did impress people. Plus I learned a lot about investments and how the market works. But I quickly learned two other important facts about being a stockbroker. First, it bored me. It wasn't colorful and exciting; it was black and white and drudge and plod. Second, and even more important to me, it was full of rejection. Even your good customers could get nasty if their investments didn't perform the way they wanted. People lose their sense of humor, not to mention their compassion, when dealing with their money. Even worse was trying to get new customers. For example, in the brokerage business, if you make ten phone calls (we called it "dialing for dollars") and only nine of them hang up on you—but one listened—this was supposed to be *good odds!* Considering that it ruins my entire day if someone says one cross word to me . . . well, you can guess that I had too many ruined days.

About the only time I had fun being a stockbroker was when I brought my baskets of chocolate-dipped strawberries, which I'd continued to use as my signature marketing tactic, to the financial classes that my firm held at the local library. When I walked in the door, everyone's face lit up. Word got around about the great treats our financial classes provided, and boy, did the attendance improve.

A big "aha" moment came when our firm moved to a new office and we held a grand-opening party. We had a local caterer come in to do most of the food, but my boss asked me to bring my chocolate-dipped strawberries too. I went all out and made the spread look as beautiful as I could. It was a sensation, far eclipsing anything the professional caterer laid out (and it cost about a tenth as much).

During the party, I had two conversations that had a big effect on me and the rest of my life. My boss came up to me and whispered, "Nobody's talking about anything except your strawberries! It's hard to get them to talk about investments." The room was full of stockbrokers, for goodness sake. Stockbrokers *live* to talk about investments—yet here they were babbling about strawberries.

And then my mentor in the office, a remarkable woman and a highly successful stockbroker, asked me a question. "If you can do this, why are you working here?"

At first I was puzzled. "What do you mean?" I asked.

She said, "You're so good at this, I just wonder why you don't do it for a living."

Click. She flicked a switch in my head, throwing light on an idea I had never even considered before: that it might be possible to make money doing something I enjoyed.

It took a few more months before I acted on this insight, however. I continued to be miserable doing a job I hated, and my job performance started to decline. Soon I had only about two thousand dollars to my name. It was the most broke I'd ever been.

Probably this was part of God's plan for me. Often your courage doesn't show up until it is absolutely necessary.

### *Doing What You Love Takes Courage*

One day I was feeling more stressed than usual. I was sitting in my car, scribbling figures on a legal pad in preparation for a sales call and wishing I could just go home. I looked up and saw a florist delivery van parked nearby. "What a great job that driver has," I thought. "All day long, people are happy to see him. He's surrounded by beauty. When he goes home at night, I bet he feels great."

That florist delivery van was the tiny nudge I needed. I stopped teetering on the edge and leaped. The next day was Friday, and that afternoon I went to my boss and told him I wanted to resign. When he asked why, I informed him that I was going to pursue the idea of dipping strawberries as a full-time business.

He didn't laugh, although I'm sure he wanted to. "Why don't you just take a week off?" he suggested kindly. "Get away and relax."

I don't blame him for thinking I was crazy. From stockbroker to strawberry dipper does sound a bit outrageous. But then, outrageous is my natural style.

I did take part of his advice, though. I took the week off. But I did not relax. Instead I worked on my berry business ideas all weekend. On Monday morning I jumped out of bed at six and ran around the block because energy and excitement were zinging through me. That week I made up sample gift baskets filled with dipped berries and took them to local businesses such as car dealerships and printers. I told them how I had used these baskets to get and keep my real-estate and brokerage clients, and I asked them if they might be interested in sending these gift baskets to their clients.

They certainly were. In fact, I was overwhelmed with great feedback

from everywhere I went. My berry business was about to be born.

This time I was a little smarter about leaping. Leaping into an established mortgage business or stockbrokerage is one thing; leaping into a business that is not much more than a hobby is another. I quit my job at the brokerage, and then I took other jobs that would help me learn about the gift delivery business. For instance, I took a job with a balloon bouquet delivery company for five dollars an hour. The low pay didn't bother me, because I loved every minute of that job and learned a lot. And if I loved delivering balloons, how much more would I love making and delivering my beautiful chocolate-dipped strawberries—while making money too?

So in 1989 I started my own gift basket business, working out of my one-bedroom condo and financed by a \$1,500 credit-card cash advance. People ask me today if I was scared, but I wasn't. I was too excited to be scared. I owned my own business! Although the first time someone called me an entrepreneur, I wasn't sure I knew what the word meant.

### *Love Helps You Persevere*

It would be great if I could say that my business was all hearts-and-flowers perfection every minute of every day from the very beginning, but no one would believe me—because of course it wasn't. We all know that's not how life works. Although I was having fun and doing what I loved, I was also working my butt off. I was often wiped out at the end of the day, with little energy to put into my relationship with Clay—and I wanted Clay to be my number-one priority. Not only that, but as I learned the business, I made some mistakes that were real doozies! (Luckily I could eat some of them.)

That's why loving what you do and doing what you love is so important. It can keep you going even when you long to stop. I learned this on the first Valentine's Day of my new business.

Since I hadn't been through a Valentine's Day in the gift business yet, I wasn't prepared for the crush of orders I received, even though my boss at the balloon shop had told me you could only make lots of money on Valentine's Day if you were *really* organized. I spent the morning of February 13 doing prep work and last-minute shopping and didn't start putting the orders together until too late in the day.

The phone continued to ring all afternoon, and I ended up with 100 orders to make.

That first year I had one Valentine's Day product offering, a basket filled with one dozen gourmet chocolate-dipped strawberries, with a three-balloon bouquet attached. The gourmet berries were perfect, but that balloon bouquet was a big mistake!

Clay came over that evening after work, and he labored beside me, dipping, arranging, tying ribbons, blowing up balloons—you name it. But at two a.m., he finally gave up. He was out of energy and had to get up at six to go to his own job. So he kissed me goodnight, wished me well, and left me alone—still not done with all the orders.

At 3:30 a.m., a balloon blew up in my face, bruising my cheek and startling me so much that I shrieked. Then I cried out of sheer exhaustion. But I kept dipping, arranging, tying, and blowing. I had no choice.

By the time the friends whom I'd convinced (begged, promised, threatened . . . ) to help me showed up at 8:30 a.m. on the fourteenth, I was finally done. My tiny condo was filled with 100 strawberry-filled baskets and 300 balloons. The kitchen was a chocolate-covered disaster. There was a tiny tunnel snaking through the baskets that led from the front door to the bathroom. I crept through the tunnel into the bathroom, closed the door, sat down—and couldn't get myself to stand back up. My stomach hurt from tension, my head was pounding, my cheek hurt where the balloon had burst against it, my fingers hurt from tying ribbons, and my legs and feet hurt from standing. And the worst part of it all was that I still had Valentine's Day *ahead of me*.

Did I still love what I was doing? Not right then. But suddenly I realized that if I gave up, I'd probably never find that love again. If I kept going, I knew it would come back. So I reached deep and found one tiny molecule of energy located in the tip of one of my little toes. And I got on my feet and out the bathroom door.

Then I went gung-ho for another ten hours straight, taking in last-minute orders, dipping and arranging them, blowing up more of those darn balloons, and delivering them to all my new customers. By seven that night I was so tired I could hardly stand, but I insisted that Clay take me out to dinner anyway. First because it *was* Valentine's Day, but mostly because I hadn't eaten in over thirty hours. Now I'm usually very sensitive to looking good. I love clothes and playing with my hair—but not that night. I went just as

I was, chocolate stains, ponytail, and all. I'm sure I was the ugliest Valentine in the place, and I didn't even care.

If you don't have a fire inside, you can get burned out.

### *Never Stop Loving What You Do*

That memorable Valentine's Day was decades ago, and I'm glad to report that the insight that came to me in the bathroom that day was absolutely correct. The love did come back, and that's a good thing, because it was just the first of many all-nighters. I still love what I do; in fact I love it even more. This is my number-one secret of success.

My company was built on chocolate-dipped strawberries. That's pretty simple, and not that special either. There are many other companies that sell dipped fruit products, and some have been doing it a lot longer than I have. What makes us different? Why do our strawberries (and other goodies) seem as if they are covered in pixie dust?

I think it's because we love—really love—making and selling them. Not just me, although it starts with me, but the people who work with me. All day long we're around stuff that looks and smells beautiful. We get to play with our hands and let our imaginations run loose. We are a part of special times in people's lives, such as birthdays, engagements, weddings, and hundreds of other celebrations. Our customers tell us their stories about whom they love and why. We get to share in their happy times.

As a child, I loved giving gifts, especially those I wrapped myself. I loved making things that made people feel good and come back for more. I loved parties and celebrations where people laughed and had fun. When I dreamed of being rich and famous, it was so I could have a party every day if I wanted to. And I loved strawberries because it's darn near impossible to eat a chocolate-covered strawberry and still be grumpy.

That's the real reason I love what I do. What I do thrills people. I help them—and me—have fun. People talk about the bottom line in business, which means the money is what counts. Don't get me wrong—money is important and I like making it and having it. But the bottom line for me is the look on people's faces when they see me or my strawberries coming toward them.

### *A Berry Good Tip*

Many people are confused about how to take their love of baking, or horses, or politics, or bookkeeping, or needlework, or *whatever*, and turn it into a career. I hope my story gives you some ideas in that direction.

But what if you don't know what your passion is? This is true of a lot of us. It was true of me for many years. When we grew up, many of us lost that connection to our joy. Here's the thing: it's usually not the activity itself that you love but the way it makes you feel. Try this tip and see if it works for you.

Think back to when you were around ten years old. Play detective and ask yourself some questions about you as a ten-year-old, such as: When you went out to play, what did you like to do best? Did you like playing with a gang of friends, or with one special friend, or were you a dreamer who liked to play pretend games all alone? Did you like lots of physical activity? Did you like games with rules and structure? Did you like being on a team? Did you like playing house, or store, or teacher, or movie star? What were your favorite toys? What did you want to be when you grew up?

If you can't remember your childhood, that's okay. Instead, *pretend* that you are ten years old right now. What would you like to play today?

Get in touch with that little kid inside you. She (or he) is still there. What makes her happy? And why?

You're nearly there. If you loved it as a little kid, you still do. Now figure out a way to give her what she wants. I know you can do it.

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### Shari's Secret Recipe #1 Chocolate-Peanut Butter-Banana Milkshake

#### *Made the Old-Fashioned Way*

5 tbsp. chocolate syrup  
¼ cup creamy peanut butter  
1 whole banana, peeled and sliced  
1½ cups milk  
9 scoops vanilla ice cream (or as many as your blender will hold)



Blend all ingredients in blender until smooth. You can use less milk if desired; the thicker the better. Makes 4 servings.

Hint: Use the very best vanilla ice cream you can find. I prefer Breyers® Vanilla Bean.

*Made the Fast and Easy Modern Way*

**3½ cups vanilla ice cream**

**2 cups milk**

**8 frozen chocolate-peanut butter-banana slices from the Berry Factory**

Combine ice cream and milk in blender. Drop in dipped fruit and fold into ice-cream mixture by blending on lowest setting. Makes 4 servings.

This is super easy and yummy!