

STORY | LEADERSHIP

Courage Comes From Caring

“If a single mom, socially and emotionally handicapped, with no skills, no people skills whatsoever, could make it, then anybody could— and that’s especially important for women to believe, and that’s become my driving force.”

from **The Greatest Networkers in the World** by **John Milton Fogg**

2287 words | 7 pages



Donna Imson was born and raised in a small city high in the mountains outside of Manila, the capital of the Philippines. Her dad died when she was 12, so it was just Donna and her brothers growing up with their mom and grandparents. “It was an average life,” Donna says. “There wasn’t really anything worth noting about my childhood.”

Donna married when she was 18. By the time she was 23 she already had three children. She dropped out of college to focus on raising them, but Donna’s marriage didn’t last.

“When you marry young, you don’t really know what you’re getting yourself into,” Donna said. It turned out to be a difficult, dysfunctional marriage, but she couldn’t leave, she wouldn’t leave without the children. So for seven years she stayed in that abusive marriage.

“I was very much focused on my children,” Donna says. “I felt like my purpose in life was to stay home and be a mom. I was happiest in that sense, but because of the nature of my relationship with my husband, it was impossible for me to have done anything else outside the home.”

Donna made several attempts to leave, but she invariably returned. She was psychologically trapped in a vicious cycle.

The turning point came when Donna’s husband turned on her daughter.

“I realized that it was not just me that was under threat, but it was also my children, and that spurred me into action,” Donna said. “By the grace of God and with the help of friends, I managed to leave for good. We had two bags and \$10 to our name.”

“We were moving from house to house for several months. I didn’t want to be found. It was a very difficult time.” And it was a defining moment.

Donna looked at her kids and knew she had to give them a better life.

There was nobody else they were going to be able to count on.

Despite the desperation Donna felt, she knew what she didn’t want to do. If she got a minimum wage job— which with her lack of education and skills was all she could hope for— she would have to leave her children in the care of somebody else. She’d be paying most all of what she earned for someone to do what she really wanted to be doing. That just didn’t make sense.

So instead Donna baked things and sold things and just tried to make do. She had moved back in with her mother, who lovingly stretched whatever resources she had to accommodate four extra people, so Donna didn’t have to worry about rent or food. She had the temporary “luxury” of choosing not to have a job.

“My life prior to that moment was very average, Donna says. “I didn’t excel in anything. I really didn’t have any dreams growing up. I was a nobody. All I had was that one desperate need to make my children’s lives better.” That’s what led Donna to Network Marketing, which she’d rejected back when she was still married.

“It’s funny,” Donna says, “because I really didn’t get sponsored. I had a friend who would pick me and the kids up to go to a Vacation Bible School where we were both volunteering in and he would tell me about this company he worked for.”

“He sounded very proud of them,” Donna says. “I asked him to tell me about it. It was Network Marketing. They happened to have a free

registration period and that was the very last day. So, I didn't have to bring any money. I was desperate enough to try anything."

A couple of days after her friend called and said, "Okay, I connected you with so-and-so." Donna didn't know "so-and-so."

She didn't have an upline, didn't know what to do to get started so... she didn't do anything. But her mind had been opened. When another friend who really was active came and presented her with an opportunity, she readily said "yes." This time, Donna had an upline. First thing he told her to do was get to the meetings, and she did.

Donna went to meetings for three months. Every week. Finally her sponsor told her, "You know Donna, you're supposed to be inviting people to these meetings with you."

But she just couldn't invite anyone. Donna was terminally shy.

She didn't have any people skills and her abusive marriage left her emotionally challenged and socially handicapped.

Donna learned enough in those three months that when she finally talked to a friend interested enough to listen she readily drew circles on a piece of paper, and realized for herself, "I can do this."

Her friend also realized that and signed up right then and there. Donna started with that one friend. Every Saturday they would meet in her friend's house for a home meeting, and after a few months, the group started to grow. Donna became a bit more confident. She was able to do the same thing with another friend, and eventually another. The organization slowly grew bigger.

"Okay," Donna said, "let's keep doing this, and let's just keep doing it and doing it." It was neither fancy nor flashy. She wasn't making a whole lot of money, but now she could afford the tuition and make sure her kids went to a proper school.

"Once I made the decision that I was going to do this business, and if I was going to do it, then I might as well do it right," Donna said, "the

opportunities started opening up for me. I started seeing people. I started thinking of people. I started attracting people. Because I was in Network Marketing and I had my 'why' and that was very compelling for me— I got the courage to start talking to people.

There's a quote Donna loves by the Chinese sage, Lao Tzu, "*From caring comes courage.*" That's really how Donna broke through and began to speak with people and grow her business.

Donna gave herself a manageable goal: To make sure she made one presentation a day.

"That was doable for me," She says. She could do that while the children were in school. "It didn't require a lot of time. I just made sure that I did that one presentation every day."

"Then on Saturdays, I'd arrange for somebody to watch the children for a few hours in the afternoon and I would have my group meetings. I just did that every week, week in, week out, the same thing over and over again." That's what Donna took responsibility for.

And one of Donna's core values is responsibility. "The bottom-line was that I was where I was because of me. Not because of anything or anyone else— because of me, and the choices I've made. So if I wanted to change it was in my hands, nobody else's."

"In five years, Donna built a business that provided a monthly income equivalent to that of a bank manager's— a far cry from where she came from, but she was still living from paycheck to paycheck. Her confidence and skills were growing and so was the organization she was building together with her mother.

Then out of the blue, the company's executives terminated her mother's distributorship. "I saw the dark side of the business, and it was like being hit in the solar plexus," Donna said. "My belief in Network Marketing was so badly shaken I stopped doing the business and considered quitting Network Marketing altogether."

Five months into Donna's "sabbatical," she attended a generic Network Marketing training event where she met Joseph Bismark, who went on to

become her upline and founder of the company she's been with for 13 years. "It was Joseph and our other founder, Dato' Vijay Eswaran, that saw what I was capable of way before I did," Donna said. "They worked patiently with me to help me be the leader that I am today."

Donna had an extraordinary opportunity to take a stand again for her value of responsibility when she was arrested and put in jail for the crime of... Network Marketing.

In the Americas and Europe Network Marketing is a mature and accepted, even admired, business model. In many parts of the world, however, Network Marketing resembles the frontier days of the Wild, Wild West. In other parts, it's downright dangerous. Donna was co-facilitating a leadership conference for her company. She respectfully declines to mention where this occurred, "because," she says, "it's a beautiful country and the people are just amazing." Donna was on her way to the airport when she was stopped by the police. They had been waiting, and asked her to go with them.

"I was in a strange land, didn't know anybody, didn't speak the language, thousands of miles away from anything familiar— and I was really afraid," Donna remembers. "But at the same time, I knew I'd done nothing unlawful." But she was wrong.

What should've been a matter that could have been cleared in a few minutes became an 11-month ordeal for Donna. She probably could have gotten out of jail sooner. There are things you can do with connections and resources. But Donna sensed that if the police didn't have her, they'd go after the other leaders in that country.

She decided to stay and fight it, to prove that her company and Network Marketing weren't scams. That in fact...

Network Marketing is an opportunity that could be one of the greatest things that could happen for their country and their people.

“It was a necessary sacrifice,” Donna says. “I know there were dangers, but at that point, I wasn’t thinking of that. It was more important to make a stand for our company, for our people, for Network Marketing.” Remember, *“Courage comes from caring.”*

Donna feels that she found the belief she didn’t have growing up and the gift of her life purpose through Network Marketing. “Regardless of where you’re from or who you are, you can do it,” Donna says. “If a single mom, socially and emotionally handicapped, with no skills, no people skills whatsoever, could make it, then anybody could— and that’s especially important for women to believe, and that’s become my driving force.”

“The very best thing about Network Marketing is that it’s for everybody. It’s for people like me. It’s for professionals, students. Whoever you are, regardless of your race, color, or creed, Network Marketing is one of the most valuable opportunities to really transform lives.”

“In Asia and Africa, where today it’s all about reducing hunger and providing livelihood, you’ll find scores of people wanting change, demanding change, but at the same time they don’t really have much of an opportunity to make change happen.” “Well, here’s Network Marketing.”

Who says that Network Marketing cannot make a difference in these countries?

“There is a very big need right now for people to just *earn*, and I think that Network Marketing is the way for them to be able to do that. That’s why I’m so very passionate about this business. It’s just... I want to have more and more people realize they could really change their lives and the lives of the people around them through Network Marketing. And that they’re worth it, just like I was.”

“I am eternally grateful to God and to the people He’s brought to my life, because otherwise, I wouldn’t be who I am, where I am today. “The courage I’ve had to make a change, to be the change, and stay with the change, came from their caring. And my desire is to inspire people to be the same, to the countless others out there in need of change.”

From [*The Greatest Networkers in the World*](#)



John Milton Fogg is an author, editor, speaker and coach. His books and audios have sold over three million copies worldwide.

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John is the author of the best-selling industry classic *The Greatest Networker in the World*, which has been read by more than two and a-half million people around the world and he has edited and contributed to far too many books to be mentioned here.

He has spoken around the globe, through out Canada and the United States, in Australia, China, Costa Rica, Crete, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russia, Singapore, Trinidad and the Ukraine.

John is married to Jekaterina (Katyusha), has a daughter Rachel 28, son Johnny 23, daughter Eleonora Milena (Ele) who's 7 and Anais Polina (his 'last child') was born in March, 2006.