

Q&A

A conversation with

**Deborah
Reber**

Author of

**In Their
Shoes:
Extraordinary
Women
Describe Their
Amazing
Careers**



Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing
www.SimonSaysKids.com

Q: How did the idea for this book come about?

A: Much of the inspiration came from my own experience—it took me a long time to figure out what I wanted to do with my life. When I was in high school and college, I thought I wanted to work in broadcast journalism—I saw the movie *Broadcast News* countless times as a teen, and I knew I wanted to be just like Jane, the obsessive, quirky news producer played by Holly Hunter. But after college, I got an inside glimpse of the world of network news and I realized that making career decisions based on a Hollywood movie probably wasn't the smartest move. So I bounced around in different jobs in my twenties, enjoying the work on one level but always feeling like a big piece was missing. I envied women who were so fulfilled by their jobs that they didn't have to burn the midnight oil pursuing their true interests. . . women whose work and passion were one and the same. Now that I've finally found that career in writing, I feel a sense of responsibility to provide the next generation of career women access to the kind of information and inspiration I didn't have.

Q: You interviewed an incredibly wide array of women for *In Their Shoes*. How did you come up with such an extensive list of interviewees?

A: In order to make *In Their Shoes* as inclusive and comprehensive as possible, I decided early on to select women who were not only geographically and ethnically diverse, but at different stages in their careers as well, from entry-level and middle management to top executives. I also felt it was important to present a balance of career fields and ensure that jobs in typically male-dominated fields, like math, science, and business, were strongly represented. Once I had my wish list of careers, I did a ton of networking and research to find the women who eventually ended up in the book.

Q: Were there any careers not covered that you wish you could have written about?

A: There are so many careers I would love to have included, such as surgeon, archeologist, musician, astronaut, dancer, zoologist. . . the list goes on and on. But we wanted to create a book that didn't need to be carted around with a backhoe, so we drew the line at forty-nine in-depth profiles, along with brief descriptions of another two hundred and forty five careers.

Q: Do you have a favorite interview or one that surprised you most?

A: Each woman I interviewed was so passionate about her career and life, and so interesting in her own way. There were surprises throughout the whole process, as I had at least one "aha" moment during each conversation. I can't single out one favorite. . . I feel so honored to have had this amazing group of women open up to me about their professional and private lives.

Q: What is the best piece of advice you can give young women on the verge of making career choices?

A: I think it's important that young women stay open and not put too much pressure on themselves to get on the fast track or be concerned if their career sidetracks in an unexpected direction. There is a lot of pressure on young women to go to the right school, graduate with the right GPA and get the perfect entry-level job, and the reality is, life just doesn't always work out the way we planned. But if girls stay true to themselves, follow their passions, and stay open to the possibilities in learning, growing, and taking something away from each experience, then every step will be a move in the right direction.

-continued-

Q: *In Their Shoes* is unlike other career books because of its inclusion of the nuts and bolts of each job, such as, the required education, salary, and dress code and the ups and downs of a typical day. Why do you feel these things are so important to making smart career choices?

A: My goal in writing this book was to present young women with the reality of different careers. Because so many of our impressions about life are shaped by what we glean from the media, we rarely, if ever, see a complete picture. And the reality is, there are many different factors that go into making a career what it is. I wanted to present the kind of information that would help girls make educated choices based not just on their interests, but with an understanding of the *details*—what the work environment is like, the tasks involved in a typical day, how much time is spent online or on the phone, how much work is done under deadlines and tight pressure, how much travel is involved, and so on.

Q: You included a chapter entitled “Women vs. Men in the Workforce.” What do you hope young women will gain from this chapter and the entire book?

A: I want young women to have a sense of the reality of work environments when it comes to gender disparities in salary, as well as careers that are over- or under represented by women. Many women graduate from college and find themselves surprised to be in a position where their gender affects how they are perceived or treated in the workplace. That’s not to say that understanding the realities means we should accept them, but awareness can help women be more prepared to handle such situations when and if they arise. My hope is that every young woman reading this book will find inspiration in the experiences of the amazing women in its pages, and be filled with a sense of hope and excitement about the impact she can make on the world through her own career journey.

Q: Aside from making career choices, what do you think are some of the most important issues teen women face today?

A: I began writing books for young adults because I want to help young people emerge through the teen years with their self-esteem intact. In writing *In Their Shoes*, I was astounded to discover that even women at the top of their game with impressive positions and lifestyles still sometimes struggle with self-doubt and remnants of low self-esteem. I think growing up is more challenging than ever for today’s teen girls because they are constantly bombarded with messages in the media that that they’re not pretty enough, not smart enough, not “whatever” enough to be valuable in society. Those are tough obstacles to overcome as an emerging adult.

Q: What are you working on now?

A: I’m working on a nonfiction book for twenty- and thirty-something women to help them deal with leftover baggage from their teen years so they can live more fulfilling and empowered lives.

**Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers
Contact: Jaime Feldman 212.698.2110
Jaime.Feldman@simonandschuster.com**

This interview is provided by Simon & Schuster Children’s Publishing and can be reprinted for publication either in full or excerpted as individual questions and answers, as long as they are reprinted in their entirety.