

CROW'S CAWS by crow cohen



On Feminism and Creativity

I am trying to write a book.

I realize people write books all the time. But you have to have so much faith in your own brain that you can imagine others would want to spend hours floating around in there like you do; what I'm really confronting here is my resistance to devoting major life energy to creativity when I'm not in a position to make a living off my art.

I'm not trying to make you all feel sorry for me because I essentially thrive on the challenge of undertaking such a big project – even though I feel overwhelmed by it half the time. But since feminism has taught me that process is as important as product, I thought I'd share some of my struggles assuming that we all have the drive to create, and we're all resistant to one extent or another.

I first had the idea of writing this book when I was in my late 30s. I'm now in my late 50s. Back then, I knew I was part of an era in history when lesbians were fomenting revolution, and I wanted to describe what that was like for me. I even told my mother that's what I was doing.

Unfortunately, she kept asking me throughout the years, "How's that book coming?" when most other people forgot about it. Mothers are like that. They want to know that you're not just wasting your time but making it big in the world, bless their hearts. (They can drive you nuts holding you accountable like that.) I used to say, "It's coming, Ma, it's coming," when I should have been saying, "Don't hold your breath, Rosie."

The good news is that by waiting so long, my values have changed; and I have a more, shall we say, "mature" perspective on my callous youth.

So what are some of those obstacles that prevent us from completing our life's work? Lack of money and domestic responsibilities are two biggies which, fortunately, are not impediments for me right now. That leaves laziness, lack of organizational skills, and fear. I'll be so bold as to eliminate laziness. I'm too hyper to be lazy. My problem is I don't know how to sit still. I have plenty of organizational skills...I make a living helping people sort out their chaos.

So what's left? Fear. Which goes something like this: "What if I come across sounding classist, racist, homophobic, anti-Semitic? What if I put years into this manuscript and no one wants to publish it? What if my family never wants to speak to me again? What if I quit like I've done so many times before? What if I tell all these hundreds of *OITM* readers I'm writing a book; and someone on the street stops me and asks me how it's going? I can't say, 'Don't hold your breath, Charlie' because that would be rude."

Committing myself to this project is like committing to a relationship. Some days I wake up jubilant and can't wait to have at it. Other days I drag my ass out of bed and decide I have nothing to say, nothing to give, and am just one big fraud – always was, always will be. Because I value serenity, however, I want to make sure that my life somehow remains in

It's like committing to a relationship. Some days I wake up jubilant and can't wait to have at it. Other days I drag my ass out of bed and decide I have nothing to say, nothing to give, and am just one big fraud always was, always will be.

balance during this process. I need to leave time for my spiritual practice, my family, my community, my friends. I no more want to obsess about this book than obsess about a relationship, although I realize at times that's unavoidable. I'm only human.

Last year, I was in rough emotional shape, which would have been an excellent reason

to abandon this project once again. But it turned out that one of the biggest gifts in terms of recovering from intense grief involved my work on this book. Part of my research included transcribing tapes I had made of activists from that era, which helped me stay con-

time, I doubted my own capacity to love.

At another crucial juncture, I felt totally overwhelmed by the amount of material I had. I was buried beneath the rubble of paper I had created and couldn't move. It was at that point I remembered one of the chief tools I've learned to maintain that serenity I mentioned before – ask for help. Writing can be a lonely business so I joined a small support group of women who wanted to work through their creative blocks, found a mentor who has actually published real books, and recently joined a feminist writing group all of which has helped me to feel less alone.

Most of all, I remind myself that this book is not just about me. It's about service to my community, about honoring our "herstory," and about not staying stuck in egotistical fear. It's about writing one page at a time until one day, I look at the pile of papers in my lap and say, "It's done." Don't hold your breath, Crow.

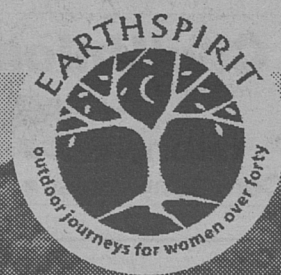
Crow Cohen lives in Winooski. ▼

Still Going Strong...



Congratulations to the women who have created careers for themselves doing what they love...

Pat Waterman and Barbara Maltby, Owners & Guides
Graduates of the Women's Small Business Program



Call today toll-free at 877-770-8922!

Now Accepting Applications for the
fall cycle of Start-Up

The

STORE

of Rochester