

Genevia Fulbright

It's 9 p.m. on a weeknight, bedtime for a certain 7-year-old in the Fulbright household in Durham. Genevia heads upstairs to tuck in her daughter and tell her bedtime stories—tales she often makes up on the spot, thanks to an irrefutable creative streak.

Genevia creates these short stories to lull her little girl into sleepiness, stories that typically include children, with themes of exploration and entrepreneurship, innovation and creativity. It's the stuff dreams are made of, and Genevia's daughter likes to share hers with her mom. Like one day owning a hair salon that has a back-scratching machine. For a dollar, it'll scratch your back for a period of time. The salon would also have a bookstore nearby, with a center where parents can leave their children, as long as they patronize her salon, one of seven she'll own one day.

When Genevia was a child growing up in Oakland, Calif., Genevia's mother, a teacher, and father, a pharmacist, would often tell her great and inspiring stories, stories that taught Genevia early in life the value of innovation and creativity. As she grew, Genevia at first thought that she'd like to follow in her mother's footsteps and become a schoolteacher, but after being exposed to accounting and economics in high school, she decided to major in them and graduated with an accounting degree from San Francisco State University.

What is now Fulbright & Fulbright, CPA, PA, began in January 1986 as a sole proprietorship formed by Edward D. Fulbright, now Genevia's husband. The two met at a National Association of Black Accountants convention in 1985, married in May 1989, and formed Fulbright & Fulbright, CPA, PA, in 1992. Genevia was appointed vice president in 1992 upon attaining CPA certification.

Through it all, Genevia's creative streak remained strong, which is why exploration and entrepreneurship form the cornerstone

of the couple's business today. Genevia officially branched out into business coaching a few years ago after discovering it's what she'd been doing, unofficially, all along.

"I love new ideas, I love networking," she says. "If I can help another practitioner, I'm always open to that, open to serving the public. We all have to work together to improve our profession. If you're not providing value-added services, your clients are thinking of your services as just a commodity, a commodity they want as cheaply as possible. Lots of CPAs are just technicians, and they're falling by the wayside. We should be helping clients land interviews, get connected, get more business. It's about taking care of people who take care of you."

Genevia says she enjoys working with early-stage entrepreneurs, helping them to develop their businesses and assisting them in finding additional revenue streams. Many of her clients are freelancers, artists, computer consultants, and small professional firms. Their enthusiasm, she says, is infectious. "Entrepreneurship is important, because it allows you financial freedom and the freedom to be able to make choices. It also gives you more control."

Both Genevia and Edward like the control of having a small firm, with a small staff, and don't want to grow much larger than their two offices—one in Durham, the other in Littleton. A small firm, however, means constant work, preparing taxes year-round, and trying to find fun things to do with and for clients. Vacation time, therefore, is cherished. For the occasional getaways, Genevia likes to hit the lakes, whether it's as close as Jordan Lake near Apex, or as far away as Lake Tahoe. Speed boating or snowmobile riding allow for unwinding and relaxation.

And dreaming. Big. "Maybe, in the next five years, I would like to work with a team on a screenplay about accountants," she muses. "I don't see a lot of good television shows that portray CPAs. I'd like to see something



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MEET THE MEMBER

similar to *L.A. Law*,” the Emmy award-winning television drama about a top Los Angeles law firm that aired from the mid-1980s through the early '90s. No, she wouldn't like to star in it: She's a behind-the-scenes kind of person, though she recently portrayed a corporate secretary and a project manager in a corporate training

video called “A Tale of Two Boards” produced by the National Association of Corporate Directors.

She's also written several e-books with MightyWords.com; .com, several nationally published articles, and two “traditional” books. Infinity Publishing released her latest, *Make the Leap: Shift from Corporate*

Worker to Entrepreneur, in February. The book focuses on strategies for becoming one's own boss, because “notions and dreams are not enough.”

Not enough, at least, for adults. But around 9 p.m. in a certain Durham household, notions and dreams are all that really matter.

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