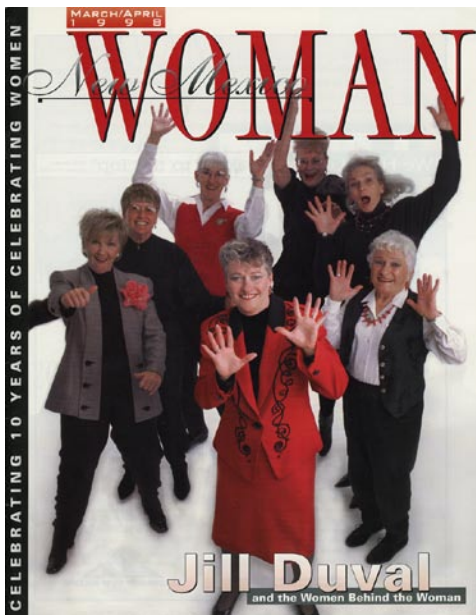


Jill Duval—Activist, Publisher



Committed to building a strong women's community in New Mexico, Jill Duval has been involved in the establishment of virtually every important New Mexico women's organization and event in the last 17 years—from the New Mexico Women's Foundation, WESST Corp, Women's Expo (formerly Women's Trade Fair), to Women Entrepreneurs, and NAWBO (National Association of Women Business Owners). And of course, the establishment of the annual "Top 25," honoring the top 25 money-making woman-owned businesses in the state. She has shown her commitment to women not only via her participation and support of these events and organizations, but by making her living, setting an example, building a viable business based on that commitment. Her company, Duval Publications, is comprised of *New Mexico WOMAN* (formerly *Albuquerque WOMAN*) and the *Albuquerque Women in Business Directory*.

Jill's journey to becoming a women's activist and publisher seems in hindsight to have been a natural progression.

Born and raised in Northern New Jersey, Jill led a very

traditional life. It was a typical middle class existence. Over time, however, her life took on aspects of the unconventional. She has been married twice, and has three daughters, a step-daughter, and an adopted nephew. She lives in a "compound" she renovated in the South Valley, where her mother, Sue, has separate quarters, where her business is based, and where she and her life partner, Marty Wilson, have their home. This place is also used frequently for visits by her extended family.

During her second marriage, Jill's search for "something better" gained momentum, and led to a camping trip to the Southwest. When they got west of the Mississippi, Jill "knew" it was a better way to live, "knew" it was right. Jill admits she was not assertive as a young woman, that she did what was expected and often just followed along; but on that trip she told her husband, "This is it!" She said, "I'll stick it out another school year, but I don't care if you have to dig ditches, we're moving West." She surprised herself at the strength of her commitment to move and it became a turning point for her. "It was the best move I ever made. It was like coming home."

Jill continued to learn a great deal about herself, about strengths she didn't know she had, about her commitments to her family and to women. She learned about her ability to do what was necessary to get it all done. The book *Your Erroneous Zones*, by Wayne Dyer, had a profound effect on her. It opened her eyes and she began accepting responsibility for herself and her own dreams. "You have to take responsibility for your own feelings and emotions," Jill says.

After the end of her second marriage, Jill went to work in the insurance industry. Her counselor during this time was a “raging feminist,” who kept challenging Jill with issues about women, and simply to do more herself. The *Albuquerque Women in Business Directory* is a direct result of Jill’s accepting that challenge. She had a broken stereo and couldn’t find a woman to fix it. And even her feminist counselor couldn’t tell her a woman to hire. This led her to the bigger question—well, how would you find a woman to do whatever you wanted done? The Directory was born in 1981.



Jill went to the Commission on the Status of Women, printers, and others in the community. She got nothing but encouragement for the idea. The first Directory was pocket-sized, had about 150 listings, and generated about \$700 from paid advertising. “I pretty much did the work myself. I had incredible response to a flyer I put up. Two women who owned a printing company had ideas, gave advice and tips. I paid for the word processing and sold the Directory via flyers and word of mouth. I told the printers to ‘Print as many as you can with this money [that was left after expenses].’ It was a big success. People loved it.”

As she distributed the Directory,

Jill gained confidence and received much needed emotional support. “I took it to a meeting, my first women’s networking group. They applauded. I was so shy, I nearly cried. I was so in awe of what was happening. And that’s been true every year.”

After her success with the Directory, Jill had the confidence to pursue a bigger dream—a magazine. In the mid ‘80s she began getting increasing numbers of requests for a newsletter—mostly from those listed in the Directory, who wanted more information about what the other women in Albuquerque were doing. “I looked into the possibility of publishing a newsletter—to make money, to make a living. I couldn’t see the possibility of establishing a significant profession with a newsletter alone. Then I saw a woman’s magazine from another city—it had good quality editorial for business and professional women. I got excited. I knew I could really get my teeth into something like that.”

Publishing a magazine, even a newsletter would require a bigger commitment; it was a much bigger risk. The Directory had been published annually and Jill could do it part-time. Producing a more substantial publication more frequently was a different kettle of fish.

Up to this time she had not seriously thought of her publishing efforts as being money-making propositions. “I guess I thought it would be immoral or would devalue what we were doing with and for women if we charged or made money from it. Then I met with Marilyn Stutt, publisher of *On the Scene*, who said, ‘It’s okay to be noble and make money, too.’ That had a profound effect on me.”

Research led her to some startling conclusions: “I would need \$50,000-500,000 as start-up money. It would take from one to three years to get established.

“I didn’t have \$500. I knew better than to go to a bank. I knew they wouldn’t make loans to a publishing company headed by someone who had limited experience in the field. So I shelved the idea. I didn’t see

how it was possible then.”

But, Jill didn't give up on the idea. She listened to a marketing tape about newsletters and realized there wasn't a big difference between a newsletter and a magazine. “It's basically the same medium. It's written. There might be differences in size, quality, sophistication; but, the meat, the substance, is the same. So I returned to the newsletter idea.

“I decided to start. If the interest was there, if advertising would support it, and if I could figure out how to do it, I would grow it into a magazine.” It all began in 1988.

“I went to Shirley Fisher and Jean Wall, then owners of Albuquerque Budget Printing Co. I told them my vision and they saw it. They printed the first newsletter for free in March 1988. I sold three ads at \$10 each and we printed 500 copies. I used the \$30 to pay for the mailing.” It was tough.

“Writers were volunteer for a number of years and I couldn't have done it without them,” says Jill. “For a long time our designer was a volunteer as well. It grew rapidly. The first issue was 4 pages, then 8 pages, then 12 pages. Our first run was 500 copies, then 1000. Circulation increased rapidly.” Readership is now more than 20,000 every issue.

For Jill the editorial part is easy. “We have a good handle on what our readers want. We have a gem of an editor, Susanne DeWitt. Editorial is one area I don't have to worry about.” The other piece that seems to fall naturally into place is the connection with the women's community and the effect the magazine has on individuals within that community.

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The parallels between what Jill does with the women's community in New Mexico, the magazine, the Directory, and what she does within her own extended family are strong. She is “there”—she provides a place to be, a place for things to happen. She makes suggestions, offers possibilities, but doesn't believe there is just one way to do things. She is a support and a catalyst.

“What has always impressed me about Jill,” says Susanne DeWitt, “is that she doesn't really interfere in her daughter's lives. She might make a suggestion, whereas my mother would bowl in and say ‘This is not the way to do it. This is wrong.’ Jill and her daughters are very close. They have relationships I am not familiar with. She deals with her daughters as she does other women. She treats them as women. Her own personal life with her daughters mirrors what she does with the women of New Mexico.”

An example of how integrated her extended families are is her relationship to Dawn, her “step-daughter,” the daughter of her first husband. According to Dawn, Jill has never treated her as anything other than her daughter, from the very beginning; and these days Dawn—with her new baby—works at Duval Publications.

“The magazine is fulfilling a vision I had to begin with,” says Jill. “It's impact on so many lives has exceeded my expectations.” Financially, however, it has been difficult.

So, what would it take now to make the company financially sound? Without hesitating Jill says it would take \$100,000-150,000. “That would allow me to address the two biggest areas of concern: our ability to hire a capable, experienced sales staff and to gain adequate distribution across the state. We need to grow bigger to be profitable. I want the business to be financially stable. I want it to be bigger and better. I



want to continue to enhance women's lives, help them to grow, to provide opportunities, and to reach out to more women around the state."

Janet Dodd, Community Relations Representative for United Blood Services, has worked with Jill since the mid '80s in the development of several women's events and organizations such as The Women's Trade Fair, the New Mexico Women's Foundation, and Women Entrepreneurs. "Her importance to the community is her ability to persevere, her belief in what she's doing, and her steadfastness. She has a quiet power. Her savvy publicity and networking skills have been honed over the years and are very, very valuable. She cares about what's real and what's important."

With Jill Duval's kind of commitment, her kind of can-do attitude, her kind of caring, and the natural way she builds community, it is the women of New Mexico who benefit.

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