

PLANO STAR COURIER

Vol. 113 No. 89

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2002

50 cents

Plano's Miss Etiquette: Joy Weaver

By NANCY SMITH , Business editor

02/21/2002



Joy Weaver

Plano resident Joy Weaver has a favorite motto: "We're all like diamonds - we have basic value, but it's not 'til we are polished that our value is recognized."

In her 13-year career at the multi-family residential development firm JPI working her way up to vice president of corporate communications, she hired many dozens of employees and conducted hundreds of interviews. These ran the spectrum from the polished to the not-so-polished.

"I remember the gentleman that once came into my office for an interview. Before I had a chance to tell him where to sit, he actually sat in my chair behind my desk. I had to say, 'That's where I'm supposed to sit.' Needless to say, I didn't hire him."

Often before she'd hire an employee, she'd ask the receptionist what the person was like in the waiting room. "Some of them were rude. She'd tell me, 'He wouldn't even speak to me.' That told me lots about the person."

In 1993, some of the employees at her firm had a mentoring project, and she was asked if she would like to teach an etiquette class to the entire fifth grade for a year every Wednesday afternoon.

"Sometimes the parents would tell me they got more out of this than the children did. In the 1960s and '70s, there was no formal etiquette training. Many people are just realizing now how much they don't know."

In 1998, she attended the Letitia Baldrige Business Etiquette program when it was taught at the Hyatt-Regency in downtown Dallas. Last year, she attended the Protocol School of Washington, D.C., where she earned a certification as a corporate etiquette and international protocol consultant.

Two years ago, she decided to turn her training into a business and founded PROTOCOL Enterprises. Its "world headquarters," as she calls it, is her Willow Bend home overlooking the ninth hole of the queen's green of Gleneagles Country Club.

She says companies or individuals employ her by the hour, the half-day, or the entire day. She gives one-on-one coaching as well as seminars. She presented one of her lectures this week to the Women's Division of the Greater Irving-Las Colinas Chamber at Las Colinas Country Club. Her topic: "The Secrets of Business Etiquette - How to Play Hard Ball With Your Soft Skills."

She learned about the Washington protocol school by watching Jay Leno one night. Liv Tyler, the daughter of Stephen Tyler, lead singer of Aerosmith, was on the show talking about her "Granny" - Dorothea Johnson, who runs the Protocol School of Washington, D.C.

"I wrote down the name and called the next day and talked to Dorothea," Joy says. "By the time I enrolled, she said she'd received 700 calls from the one mention on Jay Leno."

Some of Joy's tips:

- Many people, when they sit down, have no idea which bread plate or water glass is theirs. For a dinner, she says to remember "BMW" which stands for "bread, meal, water." That's how a place setting lines up.
- Elevator etiquette is basic - the first person on is the first person off.
- In e-mail, don't forget to use the same basic common sense as in snail mail - use correct grammar and spelling.

- For interviews, some women may dress too trendy or too sexy. "There's nothing wrong with being sexy. But I say if you can look down and see cleavage, everybody else can, too."
- Tone down makeup and dress professionally. "We always laugh that Texas women have big hair because it's closer to God, but it's not necessarily good for a job interview."
- When you are socializing, you should not drink more than two drinks. The Generation Xers are new professionals. Someone needs to be able to tell them, 'You're not still in college any more.' More careers are killed in after hours than in the boardroom."
- Wear your name tag on your right shoulder.
- In an interview, decline anything to drink unless you're desperate for a glass of water. "People want to be their best in an interview, and there are so many things that can happen when you try to juggle your glass or your coffee cup."

Joy was born and raised near Abilene, an only child. Her mother died of heart surgery when Joy was 18 months old. Her dad was in the Air Force, so his sister's family raised her on their ranch in West Texas. Joy says she learned at an early age, "You fend for yourself. You do what you have to do."

She went to college at Angelo State University, graduating in 1983, then managed a dress shop for six months. "I realized right off the bat it was like cleaning out your closet every day." One day when she went to pay her apartment rent, the manager told her, "You should do this -- you can lease apartments. You get the apartment for free." Joy says she thought, "I'll be rich if I got my apartment for free."

The first company she worked for faltered. "I could see even from a young person's vantage point they weren't paying their bills." An apartment-locator friend told her about a small group in Las Colinas, which was a small group of less than 100 people with six apartment communities.

Joy joined it and worked her way up. By the time she left two years ago, it had 1,300 employees, was funded by GE Capital, and she says was one of the largest private apartment builders in the nation.

She was married for three years in her early 20s, but after getting a divorce and remaining single until she remarried in the late '90s, she learned that the independent traits she's mastered growing up stood her in good stead.

"I learned so much during those years. I was on my own totally. There was nobody to call 911 and say, 'I need some cash.' It was about me and my professional career. And I dotted all the I's and crossed all the T's. I walked the walk and talked the talk - but it's important to do it morally and ethically."

Joy and her husband, James, are prominent in the Prestonwood Baptist Church, where he heads the Bridge Builders group, establishing a vision clinic in the inner city. He retired two years ago after selling Technol, a medical company that makes gloves and masks, to Kimberly-Clark.

Along her career path, she saw how virtually everybody can use help on their "soft skills."

"Soft skills that give you the edge. It's all about being able to communicate. Your body language is 55 percent. Thirty-eight percent is how you present yourself. Only 7 percent is what you say. So many people have the potential, they just don't have the polish. If they'd had the polish, they would have gotten the job."

PROFILE: Joy Weaver

Position: president, PROTOCOL Enterprises.

Residence: Willow Bend

Family: husband James Weaver; and his sons Chad and Chris.

Education: bachelor's degree, business major, Angelo State University, San Angelo

Person I would least to negotiate with: 'Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, because I have so much respect for him.'

Best business book: 'The Bible. It's full of leadership qualities, and it's also full of the basic rules of etiquette.'

Best business advice: 'Work hard. Your performance is a result of your attitude. You need to behave your way to success. The strongest principles of growth lie within your choices.'

Best investment advice: 'Tithe 10 percent and save 10 percent. Spend the rest wisely.'

Person I would pay to hear speak: the Rev. Billy Graham.

Favorite quote: 'This too shall pass.'

©Plano Star Courier 2002