

# ROBERTA BARLOW

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In 1972 I packed my car, placed three babies in it, and took off to the end of the world, so I thought. I had just lost an 11 year-old son to a barn fire, had a 19 year-old son in the Marine Corps, and had a very bad marriage. I thought if I didn't leave I would never live to raise my children. So I put my girls in the car and headed to California. My son was stationed in Camp Pendleton and I thought this would be the best place for me to go. God sent me here as I got to be with my son for four months before he was placed on a Navy ship and sent to war.

Starting a new life was a challenge. I knew no one. I had a sister that lived here but she had her own problems. I worked doing anything I could to support my children and to get ready for my son to return home. On Valentine's Day 1973 the Marines came to tell me the bad news that my son was not coming home. I prayed they had the wrong person and it took a month for them to get him back to the states and sure enough, it was my first-born son. Now I was really alone and had three daughters that needed me.

I worked very hard at two, three and four jobs. Then one day I was having a "pity party" and went to buy candles from a lady that sold them for \$2.00. I asked her, "Sandy, do you know where I could get a part-time job just to buy my girls each a pair of shoes?" She smiled and said, "Roberta, do what I do!" I asked her, "What do you do?" I was thinking she was so rich and beautiful and that her home just sparkled and that she was so happy. My reply to her was, "I can't sell candles." "Oh, I don't sell candles," Sandy replied. "I just sell them to you because that is all you buy. I decorate homes!" I said, "Are you kidding me? I could never do that." Her reply was, "If I can do it, you can do it. Come with me tonight and watch me."

The next thing I knew I had fixed dinner, gotten a baby sitter and was ready to start my new adventure. I was back home in three and a half hours. I was so excited I couldn't touch the ground. I signed up as a Designer but couldn't quit my other jobs – I made minimum wage of \$4.82 an hour and that was important to me. I couldn't take that chance of what would happen if the Parties ran out. I was truly scared to death.

I borrowed the \$123.00 for my starter Kit and now I had to make enough money to pay that back and then get the three pairs of shoes my girls so desperately needed. That was in March of 1978. By June of 1978 I had paid for my Kit, bought the three pairs of shoes and three one-way airline tickets to send my girls to spend the summer with my dad in Texas. I couldn't afford round-trip tickets but knew that once I got my business going that I would send for them. I met that goal and then some! If I had a day off from work I would do four Parties a day!

I know how hard it is to get started. I know what it is like not to know anyone. I had no confidence in myself. It took three years for God to tell me to quit all those other jobs and that He would take care of me. I still wouldn't listen. I went to a Seminar in Dallas and while I was there I just had to go visit my dad as I hadn't seen him in 13 years. I was supposed to be back at work on Mother's Day but my plane was delayed and I was going to be about a half-hour to an hour late for work. I made the call to my job and I got fired over the phone. My heart was broken. I got fired! But that was the best thing that ever happened. I had to try this! And now, 32 years later I am still challenging myself! I love what I do! I feel that if hadn't gotten fired I would still be trying to do 50 other things!

I am now married again and my husband has been a big fan of mine. With him and God I have been blessed. I still keep plugging along, trying to keep up with the economy a helping my people to keep the faith in themselves. I have a great Unit. I am very proud of what I do. I work hard but it is fun work. Not like answering to other people. I have my answer and God. I still have a job. I haven't had to worry about getting laid off or someone being smarter than me and taking my job. May God bless every new person that we come in contact with.

Executive Director Roberta Barlow