



PERSONALITY

LOOK AT THE LIFE & WORK OF
ALBUQUERQUEANS WHO DESERVE A TOAST

At Full Throttle

Mary Lou Dobbs has been on the ride of a lifetime, from single motherhood to top national salesperson, author, life coach—and world traveler on two wheels.

At 78 years old, Mary Lou Dobbs has never been one to back down.

three books (and counting).

Her wildly successful career began young, in small-town Indiana. One of five children, Dobbs distinctly remembers hunting with her dad during misty evenings for night crawlers, or worms commonly used for fishing bait. "I'd collect night crawlers and crickets and sell them to the fishermen for a penny apiece," she says. "I didn't know it at the time, but I was a born salesperson."

In 1970, Dobbs moved to New Mexico with her husband for what she says was a dirt lot in Rio Rancho. "I bought a lot at a dinner, and it was \$16 a month," she

remembers. "We saw blue skies and beautiful weather—and we just packed up and moved."

But at the age of 27, she experienced

a sudden divorce—and the weighted responsibility to care for her 18-month-old son on her own in a society that did not afford women many options at the time.

"In 1974, when I got my divorce, you couldn't buy a home because all the credit went to your husband. You couldn't even get a credit card," she says. "You had to start from scratch—and it was a struggle. I had no family to watch my son." With her back against the wall, Dobbs decided to do what many women at the time wouldn't even consider: enter life insurance sales. As a male-dominated field, women made up just 3 percent of the industry at the time. But statistics proved no match for her deep-seated determination. Over the next five decades, she carved out

PHOTO BY DON JAMES/ATM



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a remarkable career, selling business insurance and executive benefits, teaching and developing sales courses for bankers, and delivering keynote addresses to major companies in the 1980s and 90s. Along the way, she also earned top honors in her field, including multiple incentive trips around the world.

"There were no role models back then for women," she says. "There are people now who have been there and proved they can do it. But back then, even the commercials were very, 'Bring home the bacon, fry it up in a pan, do all the things for your man.'"

In fact, Dobbs still remembers her first professional meeting to this day. "This guy tapped me on the shoulder, and I turned around, and he said, 'I don't think women belong in insurance.' And I said, 'Neither do short little fat men.'"

Humor aside, this adversarial moment served to sharpen her resolve. "That was really happening," she says. "But what they didn't realize was that I had a son to

support. And that drove me to be a success—because no matter how bad I felt at the end of the day, I always came back, because that's what I had to do."

Still, she notes, the greatest challenge wasn't necessarily workplace discrimination; instead, it was the emotional toll of balancing a career and motherhood—the guilt of time spent away from her son while building a future for them both. "I didn't know a lot, so I had to learn sales skills. And I learned something called psychological reciprocity," she says. That concept—or the art of active listening—ultimately became the key to her success.

Despite the lack of female role models early on, Dobbs credits her first boss, Jack Scott, as a pivotal influence on her career. "He said that he knew I wouldn't fail because there was some inner confidence I had about me. And he was right," she says. "He was the kind of coach who encourages you and supports you. And I have never met anyone like that."



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Endowed with an indomitable spirit, Dobbs eventually channeled her experiences into writing. In 1982, she published her first book, 'The Cinderella Salesman,' followed by 'Repotting Yourself: Financial, Emotional, and Spiritual Flow' in 2010, inspired by the dissolution of a long-term relationship.

Her third book, 'The Art of Being a Badass Woman: Breaking the Hold on Good Girl Conditioning,' was borne by a moment that might have discouraged most—but not Mary Lou Dobbs. After receiving a scathing remark as a mistaken text from a contractor that read, 'Be nice to this woman. She's in my real estate investment group, and she's an old white woman,' the fire was lit once again. "Now I'm an old white woman, and I feel diminished again," she says. "But then I woke up to the music of Alicia Keys's 'Girl on Fire' the next morning, and I saw the humor in it."

A true Jill of all trades, Dobbs is currently in her 'retired' years and is anything but.

A certified transformation coach, she now helps women navigate limiting beliefs and step fully into their power. And nearly into her 80s, she still rides motorcycles—having traveled through 17 countries on two wheels.

"It's almost like a circuit breaker. A new track opens, and you can move in a new direction," she says on the benefits of motorcycling.

While the opportunities for women in the workplace have improved significantly since the 1970s, Dobbs notes there is still work to be done—pointing out that women, on average, still learn less than men incorporate settings.

But her advice for breaking through barriers remains as steadfast and spirited as ever.

"You chip away at them," she says. "My boss said to me, 'Whom motivates the motivator?' So you have to motivate yourself. And those people who can motivate themselves are the ones who excel." —AUS-

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