

Carolyn Bushong

## Psychotherapist creates own luck

by Susan Stallworth  
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She is 5 feet 2 inches tall and her red hair typifies her zealous, energetic style. After spending an hour with her, you feel as if you could accomplish anything.

"She" is Carolyn Bushong, an Evergreen-area resident whose psychotherapy practice has received national recognition.

Bushong specializes in relationships. She has written dozens of articles on the subject and has appeared as a guest on countless radio and television talk shows. Some of her articles have been featured in such magazines as *New Woman*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Woman*. In addition, she writes feature articles for the *New York Times Syndicate*, and at one time wrote for the *Rocky Mountain News*.

Bushong is the first to admit, however, she hasn't always been this happy or successful.

Fourteen years ago, Carolyn Bushong was a different person; she was Carolyn Doty. At that time, she recently had left her husband of three years and was a counselor at a St. Louis high school. "I followed life the way you are supposed to," she said. "I was a good little girl; I went to college, married and had a good job. I did everything right. But I woke up one day and asked 'Why am I not happy?'"

Bushong realized the only time she really was happy had been when she was either skiing or hiking in Aspen. She decided to leave St. Louis and make her dream life a reality.

Without telling another soul, not even her family until she was ready to leave for Aspen, Bushong headed West to be a ski bum.

Her hometown friends and family in Mount Vernon, Ill., were shocked by her actions. She arrived in Aspen with \$1,000, and made the best of her situation by waitressing, working in a plant shop and becoming chairperson of the Aspen Open Space Committee. She thought she would never go back to counseling again.

Then a friend called to ask a favor. Colorado Mountain College was looking for someone to conduct a seminar for women to be assertive: with some coaxing, Bushong agreed to teach the seminar. It was such a success that some of the people who participated were interested in seeing Bushong on a regular basis for counseling.

For an instant, she recalled the problems she encountered in St. Louis as a high



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school counselor, such as racial tensions and the bureaucracy of the school system. Yet, managing her own practice would work. "I realized: I changed my life, I could help them change," she said.

She borrowed a friend's office from 5 to 10 p.m. on weeknights, and began counseling again. Her Aspen practice was a

success for a few years, and then her political involvement with the open space committee caught up with her. The result: no new clients. It was then she decided to move to Denver, change her name and begin again. Within two weeks she headed over the mountains.

Bushong knew she never could live in the city again after her experience in St.

Louis, and she began looking for a place in Evergreen. She had never been here - only heard of it - and was overwhelmed by what she saw. Within a short time, she found her mountain dream house, complete with stream, acreage and plenty of sunshine. She regards her home as her sanctuary and enjoys her privacy.

Today, 4-1/2 years later, Bushong's life is complete. She spends her time between her Cherry Creek office and her home, where she writes, putting her own experiences as well as her clients' down on paper to help others.

She credits her success to "having a balanced life. I am single, secure and satisfied," she said. Bushong has vowed never to marry again and the man she has been seeing for 18 months agrees. "I deal with other couples' problems every day, and the rules they play by," she said. "That's what spoils a relationship."

Her parents' stormy 39-year marriage, which recently ended in divorce, also has contributed to Bushong's commitment never to marry again; it also is where she developed an early interest in counseling. "I was a therapist by the time I was 10," she said. "When my parents fought, I would come into their room and talk them down."

Bushong's counseling style is confrontational. She lifts the burden of society's "do's" and "don'ts" off her clients, and helps them "deprogram themselves from that patterned way of thinking," she said. Bushong also asks clients to describe their fantasy life and, together, they plan steps to achieve it.

Most of her clients are successful business people or yuppies who haven't been successful in dealing with their emotions. "I believe in setting goals and pursuing your fantasies," she said. "If there are problems with your professional life, you tackle them head-on. I teach people to do the same with their personal lives."

Bushong's fantasy is to open a retreat clinic for her clients in the mountains. "I feel the mountains and nature have a therapeutic and healing quality," she said. She also wants to continue writing and is taking steps to develop her own television talk show on relationships and how to make them healthy.

If you think Bushong is lucky and leads a charmed life, she won't agree. "I'm in charge of my own luck," she said.

Editor's note: Susan Stallworth is a freelance writer living in Evergreen.