

The best things in life are

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STYLE / LIFESTYLE

by Judy Foreman

A Spirited Woman Workshop

Walking into a room full of people one doesn't know can be intimidating, but that is exactly what I did when writer and workshop leader Nancy Mills invited me to attend one of her three-hour Spirited Woman Workshops. Taught at her airy Santa Barbara cottage, Ms. Mills' lively 12-women-only workshops are about self-expression, creative playfulness, "empowerment," and the underlying concept that virtually every woman is enough exactly as she is.

Ms Mills, who received a BA in psychology from UCLA, has created a fun, self-growth haven. With drum, horn, or tambourine in hand - which we were to bang or blow when we heard the words "Spirited Woman" (I was banging the drum) - we participated in a series of characterizations, complete with costumes and props, where we got a chance to share, talk, and recognize our accomplishments.

The workshop is about affirming the positive through laughter and playfulness rather than soul-searching; it is also a chance within a very short period of time to get to know other interesting women of different ages and professions. In my group, for example, there was a photographer, publisher, an artist, and an array of other professionals (including stay-at-home moms).

Ms Mills wasn't simply a facilitator either; she was a full participant who shared her own experiences. "I am not a practicing psychologist, but the creator of an approach I passionately believe in," she says. "My whole goal is for women to feel safe in a fun, expressive environment."

It must be working; this was the second time through Ms Mills' workshop for several of the women.

In The Beginning....

Nancy Mills' initial idea for "Spirited Woman" started with a manuscript she wrote of the same name. She completed it around September 11, 2001, after which most literary agents and publishers were not looking for, and would not even consider, an inspirational book for women. Instead of giving up, however, Nancy decided to turn her manuscript into the basis for a workshop, generate interest in her concept, and see if women were really interested in what she had to sell. That was almost two years ago.

After posting a flier at a local Santa Barbara restaurant, Nancy attracted

enough attendees to hold her first workshop here in Montecito; since then, over 300 women have taken her workshop which has been held in cities like San Francisco, Nashville, Portland, Las Vegas, and Los Angeles and in such venues as a black box theater, yoga studio, art gallery, and private artist loft.

For over a year, she has been publishing the free monthly *Spirited Woman E-Newsletter*. Nancy says she currently has about 1200 subscribers from LA to London; if you take her workshop, you get a free monthly listing of up to 60 words.

Nancy moved here from Los Angeles four-years-ago and when she lived in L.A., she published *The Travelin'*



Nancy Mills is The Spirited Woman

Woman newsletter and led corporate-sponsored "empowerment" seminars for over 3,000 women nationwide. She has also appeared on *The Today Show* and has been interviewed by such national publications as *USA Today*.

UPDATE

Nancy says she is finally gaining recognition as creator of "the Spirited Woman Approach to Life." She recently confided in me over breakfast that after her June return from the Book Expo in Chicago, some publishers and agents saw the potential of her concept as being the next Red Hat Society, Sweet Potato Queens, or Ya-Ya Sisterhood.

That's the spirit!

For More Information: Three-hour workshop with refreshments: \$65 Next workshop is Saturday afternoon, August 7, in West LA at the Black Box Theater, 1-4pm, followed by another the following Saturday afternoon August 14, in Santa Barbara, 1-4 pm For reservations call or e-mail Nancy Mills: Tel:805-698-3555 thespiritedwoman@aol.com