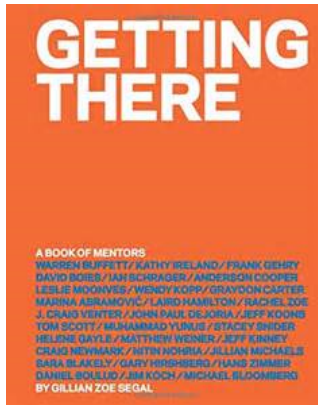


Author interview:

Gillian Zoe Segal “Getting There”



Gillian Zoe Segal is the author of “Getting There: A Book of Mentors” and “New York Characters”. She received a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Michigan and a law degree from the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law. A Montreal native, she lives in Manhattan and is also a photographer.

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InvestingByTheBooks: Gillian, it is our great honour to be able to discuss some of the topics around your greatly inspirational book “Getting There”. We have learned that you did not really have any mentor yourself, but through this book you have gained thirty of them! And it very much seems like the book is staying alive in the sense that you often still meet these people in events, gatherings, workshops etc. How has life been since publishing the book in the spring of 2015?

Gillian Zoe Segal: Life has been great and I have been thrilled with *Getting There’s* reception – both from readers and from the *Getting There* subjects. It has definitely opened a lot of doors for me. As a matter of fact, I took my thirteen-year-old daughter to a Harvard Business School event last night where Kathy Ireland (a *Getting There* subject) spoke about her business – and she even recommended my book to the audience!

IBB: With the benefit of hindsight – would you have changed anything about the book?

GZS: I am really happy with the way *Getting There* turned out, but I would have liked to have been able to include more women. The unfortunate truth is that there are currently not as many female luminaries out there to choose from, and not everyone I approached agreed to participate.

IBB: The layout of the book is beautiful, it just fits with the spirit of the content. And that cannot be replicated on a Kindle! You have actually taken all the photographs, and they all add to the story of each person in the same way as the portraits in William Green's "The Great Minds of Investing". How did you go about getting the stories down on paper? Did you interview each person and then edit it down to a text or did each person write their own essay?

GZS: I interviewed each person, transcribed the interview, edited it (cut about half of it, changed the order, etc.), then sent it back to each subject for his/her approval. I wanted to make sure that nothing got lost in the process and it was important to me that every subject was completely happy with the finished product.

IBB: How did you go about selecting the people to portray? Did every person you met make it into the book or is there some spare material...?

GZS: I was going for a group of luminaries I admired, in a broad range of fields.

Two (*women*, actually) were not comfortable having the things they shared in our interview published, so they didn't make it into the book. I asked my subjects to get very personal. Not everyone wants such revealing information out there, which I understand, but without it the essays were just puff pieces and not worth including.

IBB: What insights, behaviors and methods from the mentors have you tried to bring into your own career and life?

GZS: The key to a successful career, and life for that matter, is resilience. It is important to remember that everyone has ups and downs, and to force yourself back up when you are down. When you make a mistake, process it, learn from it, and try again.

IBB: We are not going to ask you who impressed you the most, but who surprised you given public information and preparatory work?

GZS: The scientist, J. Craig Venter (AKA the first person to sequence the human genome) surprised me the most. If you have not read his essay, you must. You will not believe that *that guy* evolved into one of the most important scientists alive!

And even though you gave me a hall pass, Warren Buffett continues to impress me the most. He is absolutely where he is for good reason!

IBB: The "closing door" aspects are absolutely fascinating in life generally. What if Buffett had not been rejected at Harvard, missing out on meeting Benjamin Graham at Colombia University? What if Michael Bloomberg was not let go at Salomon Brothers? What if J.Craig Venter had not met the shark outside the Vietnamese shores while trying to drown himself? What if Leslie Moonves' first play was not moved to from a tiny theater to a 3,000 seat one due to a cancellation? What if...? Your take on this?

GZS: I agree that it is totally fascinating and think about this concept a lot. Regarding careers:

- 1) Success has a lot to do with a person's resilience.
- 2) "The harder you work, the luckier you get."
- 3) My *Getting There* subjects are all extremely resilient, hard working people.

On account of this, I truly believe that if one door had not opened for my subjects, they would have kept at it till another did.

IBB: How did you get people to open up to you the way they did?

GZS: I like to think of myself as a pretty relaxed and accessible person. During my interviews I tried to create as casual an environment as possible. I would show up alone (no assistants or entourage) and tell my subjects to be as open as they could. I assured them that I would not publish anything without their approval, and I think they all trusted me.

IBB: There are lots of commonalities among the people in the book. How they all encounter failure and rejection, their attitudes towards risk-taking, how they question everything in order to see new openings etc. Another thing that jumped at me was the expression “being like a sponge”. Could you elaborate on your thoughts here?

GZS: No one knows it all – and the smartest people out there never stop learning!

IBB: The part about Jack Welch in the portrait of Tom Scott (Nantucket Nectars’ Co-Founder) made me laugh. Tom would see him around Nantucket, looking like a regular person and think, “That guy’s legendary business man? That guy?”. But I think lots of people react similarly once they meet CEOs or other highly successful people in general – most people at the top are not “übermensch” above and beyond the rest of us. But how do you go about realizing that in order not to be intimidated on your way up?

GZS: I think it takes practice. Meeting a celebrated luminary and observing that he/she is just a regular person is a great way -- which is why I brought my daughter on a bunch of the *Getting There* interviews and to meet Kathy Ireland last night.

I understand that most people are not lucky enough to meet their heroes in person – so I think the best way to practice is to familiarize yourself with them in the ways you can, through reading about their backgrounds and watching interviews.

IBB: What are you working on now? Any formative thoughts...?

GZS: I have been inspired by my subjects to embark on my own entrepreneurial venture! More on that soon!

IBB: Finally, which book would you recommend us to read and review during the remainder of 2016? It is always nice to be led to the right path by the real experts...!

GZS: Stand Out: How to Find Your Breakthrough Idea and Build a Following Around It, by Dorie Clark

GILLIAN ZOE SEGAL IN 10 SECONDS

Photography or Writing? **Both!**

Journalist or **Entrepreneur!**

Berkshire or Grameen Bank?

Montreal or **Manhattan?**

Magazines or **Podcasts?**

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