

Model Behavior

MAKE YOUR
CAREER PATH
YOUR CALLING

Model Behavior

MAKE YOUR
CAREER PATH
YOUR CALLING

Amy Robnik Joob

REDEMPTION
PRESS 

© 2019 by Amy Joob. All rights reserved.

Published by Redemption Press, PO Box 427, Enumclaw, WA 98022
Toll Free (844) 2REDEEM (273-3336)

Redemption Press is honored to present this title in partnership with the author. The views expressed or implied in this work are those of the author. Redemption Press provides our imprint seal representing design excellence, creative content, and high quality production.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any way by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without the prior permission of the copyright holder, except as provided by US copyright law.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture is taken from the Holy Bible, New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture marked NIV is taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved world-wide.

Scripture marked NET is taken from the New English Translation, NET Bible®. Copyright © 1996–2006 by Biblical Studies Press, LLC, <http://netbible.com>. All rights reserved.

Scripture marked NLT is taken from Holy Bible, New Living Translation. Copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture marked KJV is taken from the King James Version of the Bible, public domain.

ISBN 13: 978-1-68314-783-1
ePub ISBN: 978-1-68314-784-8
Kindle ISBN: 978-1-68314-785-5

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2018963929

What Others Are Saying

Model Behavior is just that . . . a model for finding your ministry in your work. Joob walks the reader through her discovery and modeling career into how she refined it into her ministry calling. From the glitz and glamour of the modeling industry to becoming the boots on the ground, Amy Joob shows how God works to the good in all things.

—Cindy Sproles, bestselling author and
cofounder of Christian Devotions Ministries

So excited for this book! Amy Joob has always been a joy to work with at MET-Rx and Pure Protein booths. She has always displayed “model behavior” from her work ethic and personality to an example of how to be a positive force no matter what the task at hand.

—Teresa Hartle, senior manager
Grassroots & Sports Marketing, Nature’s Bounty Co.

Amy’s words capture, inspire, and compel you. I could not stop reading her powerful story of God’s faithfulness and provisions. Her writing left me feeling challenged and ready to step into what God has for me. Her faith journey is truly an inspiration!

—Emily Norman, connection pastor,
Willow Creek Community Church, Crystal Lake, Illinois

A fantastic book! Amy gives a rare insight into the modeling world and her soul! I’ve had the pleasure of hiring her many times, and because of her

kind, gentle spirit; her inner and outer beauty; and her professionalism, she has always been my first choice! Kudos to you, Amy!

—Ava Anthony, owner, LIVE Event Productions

Amy Joob was a great influence in launching my career as a Ford model fifteen years ago when I was a new student in Bible college. Amy's beauty and spirit radiated the love of Christ. I observed the wisdom and glowing smile of this modern-day Queen Esther while never compromising her Christian beliefs for the sake of her job. I only hope her story can touch and inspire young women to be strong for Christ.

—Crystelle Tipton, model, Ford Models

In our contemporary world, with a shortage of positive role models, Amy Joob's voice rings true and needs to be heard. Young women searching for wisdom in finding their own unique career paths will find direction and encouragement in *Model Behavior*.

—Becky Melby, author, Guideposts Secrets of Wayfarers Inn Series

Amy has authored a wonderful account of how she has become the “beautiful” woman who has become a friend. While any first impression of Amy will confirm for you that her outer shell has all the makings of a professional model, I first met her at 6:00 a.m. on a running trail for Team World Vision. Her true beauty is far deeper than first impressions. No matter how our outward appearance predicates others' first impressions, what truly shapes us is the journey that forms our vision of the world. I pray that you will take the time to journey with Amy in order to see her purest beauty that only can be shaped in faith-filled living.

—Rev. Lance R. Lackore,
First Congregational Church of Huntley UCC, Illinois

Model Behavior takes the readers on a delightful journey of “blooming where you are,” despite your circumstances. The vivid illustrations of experiences, successes, and failures reminds one of a symphonic concerto being played with continual dissonance throughout and then harmonized at the end by the conductor—God, our Sovereign King. If you or your

daughter have experienced tragedy, disappointment, or defeat, you must encounter this book. It will encourage you to take one more step toward your happiness, fulfillment, and resolution.

—Dr. Karen C. Love, vice chairman, Love Family Christian Foundation

I have known Amy throughout her modeling career, and she has always been one of my top choices in Chicago. Amy's professionalism, poise, integrity, kindness, and compassion show through on every job, and she has been asked back repeatedly by the same clients. It has been a pleasure to work with Amy, and I know you will see her heart and passion shine through in her book *Model Behavior*. Enjoy!

—Anne O'Briant, Anne O'Briant Agency Inc.

Amy has always been an inspiration by the way she has lived out her faith and her calling. This book is a beautiful reminder of how God has a plan and a purpose designed for each of us. Through *Model Behavior* she reminds us to embrace the imperfections and our uniqueness and allow God to use us where we are called.

—Dave and Natalie Mudd,
pastors at Alpine Chapel in Lake Zurich, Illinois

This book is very encouraging to anyone questioning getting into the modeling industry. Amy walks us through her experience of modeling from the start of knowing nothing to working with large national brands. She shares her apprehension regarding the business, surrounding both her faith and how she viewed herself—for example, her concern regarding her facial birthmark, which she saw as a weakness, and how she was encouraged despite this. She shows that the things we see as flaws can become a trademark that makes one unique and stand out. The business is developing a more open mindset, breaking through the archaic guidelines and gatekeepers. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in moving forward into the talent market.

—Sarah Anna Hansen, photographer, www.sarahannahansen.com

Ever since I met Amy, I have seen her drive, desire, and determination to become healthy and to better love her family and those around her. Her passion is contagious, and you will be drawn into each story of adventure as you watch in amazement how God works in and through her life. You will find yourself motivated to take next steps toward your own dreams with each page you read. When I think of Amy, I think of Proverbs 12:15. She is a wise woman who takes instruction and is very responsive to God's voice. I think she will motivate you to hear and respond to His voice too. I highly recommend *Model Behavior*!

—Dr. Jill Noble, DC, CFMP, Wellness Nutrition Center

Model Behavior by Amy Robnik Joob offers a warm view of successful possibilities for any young woman desiring to follow her dream-come-true career. Joob shows how she maneuvered through uncertainty yet stayed true to her purpose. Written from her own experiences and soul-searching, this is a fresh and inspiring read that I highly recommend!

—Susan Marlene, author of devotions and short stories

Woven masterfully within her own amazing story, Amy reveals timeless truths with great insight on how our lives can have incredible purpose as we allow our vocations to be our calling! An encouraging read for those with nontraditional callings and unique talents and gifts!

—Phil Baker, founder, MinistryStudiesOnline.com

Amy's life is a great story with an even greater purpose. I've had a front-row seat to Amy's life, faith, family, and career, and she's the real deal through all the ups and downs. Are you ready to go to the next level? Grab a copy of *Model Behavior* and let Amy show you the way.

—Daryl Merrill, lead pastor,
Christian Life Church in Mt. Prospect, Illinois

Amy is a high-energy, super-positive, creative, can-do, live-by-faith-not-by-sight kind of woman. Her writings and now this book are authentically raw and genuinely inspiring. She has had this book in her ever since I met her, and I am so happy that it is happening. She has a way with words,

drawing you into the excitement and joy of living outside the box but not outside of God. I love that, and her.

—Karen Schultz, city director Refuge for Women, Chicago

It has been my privilege and joy to have known Amy Joob since her early college days as a student at Christian Life College in 1995. From my earliest observation, Amy has always had a heart to fervently seek after God and to earnestly seek to know and do His will. We have had many opportunities to share meals together and conversation regarding her calling and destiny. Amy has always demonstrated a willingness to listen to counsel, and she seemed comfortable enough to share her heart—seeking Godly wisdom as to whether to proceed toward a career in modeling or as a motivational speaker at high school assemblies. Many high school students' lives have been touched and reached as she authentically shared her life struggles with them. One of Amy's biggest passions has been to write a book and have it published. I am so glad to see that her dream became a reality.

—Jeri Oleksy, secretary and director of women's ministry,
Christian Life Church in Mt. Prospect, Illinois

*To Mom, for believing in me and
always encouraging me to model.*

*To Dad, for instilling in me a passion
for reading, writing, and books.*

*To Eric, Arianna, and Ashton, for
your laughter, faith, and love, which
brought me and this book to life.*

Foreword

Ms. Amy Joob is a true inspiration. Her book candidly shares her range of emotions as she pursues her destiny. To take a leap of faith in an industry that seems to strive on the shallow and external, we realize how much faith, commitment, support, perseverance, and hard work actually are the drivers for Ms. Joob's success.

Like many of us, Ms. Joob wears many hats—a wife, mother, daughter, friend, etc. The demands placed on her are enormous. She is able to embark on a new journey and new experiences with grace and style. Because she is grounded in her faith, she is able to be secure in her position in various new environments and shares these experiences in a way that allows us to embrace her story.

As a professional, I have recommended, hired, and worked alongside Ms. Joob. She epitomizes not only what a model should be but what an exemplary employee should be. *Model Behavior* and Amy Joob are synonymous. This book depicts an individual who has looked deep within her purpose and is able to incorporate her true being into her mission and all facets of her life and work.

Although there is a specific demographic targeted, this book can be read by anyone at any age, at any time in one's life. We all hope that our life paths and our career paths are parallel. Ms. Joob shows how, by doing so, there is harmony in our existence. She is a wonderful example on how

to ensure that if you are authentic, if you are real, you are able to achieve any goal.

Each chapter encompasses a lesson. Her career and her life's example can be reflected on and used as an example for navigating how and what we want to aspire to and ultimately achieve. If we wind up in an uncomfortable arena, we can look at Ms. Joob's experience. If we put up smoke screens or feel intimidated, we can see what Ms. Joob has done. We can all learn from one another, and Ms. Joob is a teacher who is not intimidating in the least but open, honest, real, and sweet. She truly is a giver in every form of the word, and this *Model Behavior* is a gift that she has given all of us.

Simriti (Simi) Ranajee, PhD, MBA

CEO Centers for Analgesic Transformation

Former Ms. India Worldwide

Acknowledgments

First, I want to thank God for not giving up on me and for revealing His love to me through Jesus Christ when I was twenty-one years old. Without Him, I don't think I would be here today, and my story would not exist.

And a big Minnesota bear hug to my husband, Eric, for your tireless support over the years—from my running, to modeling, to writing, and now to publishing. Thank you for not letting me give up on modeling in the beginning and for your deep pockets, which have funded this book. And to Arianna and Ashton—thank you for making me laugh, for the dance breaks, hugs, creative input, and for all the extra chores you did to help Mom out on this journey.

A special thank you to Mrs. Jerilyn Fortner, my high school English teacher. Thank you for believing in me and shaping me and my writing in those early years. Thank you, Pastor Daryl Merrill, for encouraging me to write my life story while we were at CLC, and to Leslie for praying for me and my family over the years. Thank you to Nicole O'Dell for pushing me out of my comfort zone and giving me my first writing opportunity through Choose Now Ministries.

A huge shout out to Debbie Lykins for everything you have done for me over the years. If it weren't for you, I don't even think this book would be published! Thanks for your guidance, counsel, and ability to make me

laugh when I need it most. And to my editor Beth Jusino—thank you for your patience and for all that you taught me about writing throughout the many drafts of this book. Thanks for taking a chance on me! Thank you to Inger Logelin, Athena Dean Holtz, and Hannah McKenzie from Redemption Press for believing in me and walking with me through the publishing process.

A special thank you to the entire Robnik family for your support and for all the refreshing R & R in Minnesota. And to Eric’s parents, Fred and Linda, and the Joob family—thank you for supporting us in so many practical ways through this process and helping us with our kiddos so we could work, write, and see this project to completion.

Thank you to all the friends who have encouraged and prayed for me on this journey. Lee Fisher, thank you for your unconditional love, fashion, and health tips and spurring me on to “keep writing”! Janet Reich, thank you for supporting every fundraiser and cause in our family and for the love your family has shown all of us.

Thank you to those who proofread early versions of this book: Stacy Doran, MaryLou Erickson, Fred Joob, and Jan Haggerty—you all deserve a gold medal! Thank you to my Team World Vision texting prayer group—Judi, Linnea, Ella, Clara, Carrie, Terre, Anne, Margarete, and Karen—I appreciate your unconditional love and behind-the-scenes support. And thank you to my CLC friends—Amanda, Sharon, Jac, Heather, and Danielle—for your prayers and much-needed girls’ night outs. You helped me keep my sanity! Thank you to my industry friends—Kim, Jen, Patti, Kelly, Farrah, Sia, Melanie, Tanya, Joana, Wendy, Denise, Danette, Starlight, Lisa, and April—for showing me love both at work and outside of work. And to my childhood friends—Stacy, Robyn, Patti, and Carol—thank you for loving me unconditionally and helping to shape me into who I am today. I am thankful for our forty-plus years of friendship! And to Jackie, Stephanie, Veenu, and Lee, thank you for helping me to look beautiful!

A heartfelt thank you to Jeri Oleksy and Renee Ertl, who covered me in prayer, offered me wisdom, and helped me to stay on the right path during my travels and throughout my modeling career. And to Joanne Magoc for your mentoring, wise counsel, and love that helped me to heal. A big shout out to Willow Crystal Lake! Thank you Pastor Marcus Bieschke and especially the 9:00 a.m. Greeters Team—you have been a backbone to our family.

Last but certainly not least, a huge thank-you to the companies, clients, agencies, and production companies who hired me over the years. Without all of you, this story would not be here. I am beyond blessed by the work opportunities you sent my way! Thanks a million to Nature's Bounty/MET-Rx, PCNA (Porsche Cars North America), Q-Center/Accenture, Symphony Bridal, Accent Event Productions, Anne O'Briant Agency, Aria Talent, Chicago Talent Network, Creative Impact Group, Definitive Models and Talent, Emmrich Agency, Event Pros, Holzer and Ridge Casting, Image Model & Talent, Independent Talent Source, Jennifer's Talent, Karen Stavins Enterprises, Lily's Talent, Live Event Productions, Live Marketing, Lori Lins Ltd., Productions Plus, Real Talent, Red Mink Productions, Royal Model Management, Shirley Hamilton Inc., Showmax Marketing, Strut Productions, and Unique Models & Talent.

And to you, the reader—thank you for picking up a copy of this book. I have been praying for you! I hope my story sparks something inside you that will ignite your passion and creativity and that you will take the next step toward your purpose and destiny. Who knows? Maybe I will be holding *your* book in my hands one day soon.

Table of Contents

Introduction	21
Chapter 1: Not Your Average Sunday.....	25
Chapter 2: Trailblazer in the Making.....	31
Chapter 3: Unexpected Stranger	35
Chapter 4: Fresh Start	39
Chapter 5: Total Transformation	45
Chapter 6: Nailed It!	51
Chapter 7: Snowstorm Surprise.....	57
Chapter 8: Mission Possible	65
Chapter 9: Trauma on a Tuesday	71
Chapter 10: Door to India.....	77
Chapter 11: First Time in the Ring	81
Chapter 12: Mercy Moment	85
Chapter 13: Risky Business.....	89
Chapter 14: MET-Rx and an Abundance of Grace	93
Chapter 15: Ladies, Start Your Engines	97
Chapter 16: A Kindred Spirit	103
Chapter 17: Ooh Baby, Baby.....	107
Chapter 18: Lost in the City.....	111
Chapter 19: Hand from Heaven.....	115

Chapter 20: Sacrifice Pays Off	119
Chapter 21: Breaking News	123
Chapter 22: Closing Up the Club	129
Chapter 23: Blackout Blessing	133
Chapter 24: Bodybuilding Buddies	149
Chapter 25: Help Is on the Way.....	153
Chapter 26: New Addition	159
Chapter 27: Undercover Angels	167
Chapter 28: Manna from Heaven	171
Chapter 29: Small Potatoes	175
Chapter 30: Talks Too Much	179
Chapter 31: On the Road Again.....	187
Chapter 32: The Eye of the Tiger.....	193
Chapter 33: Close Call	199
Chapter 34: Hope in Houston	207
Chapter 35: Trouble in Paradise	213
Chapter 36: MET-Rx Marathon.....	219
Chapter 37: Harrowing Flight	223
Chapter 38: Too Much Time Away	227
Chapter 39: Life in the Fast Lane.....	233
Chapter 40: Tested	239
Chapter 41: Rewarded.....	243
Chapter 42: Speed Bump.....	253
Chapter 43: Future Diplomat.....	257
Chapter 44: Close to the End	263
Chapter 45: Change on the Horizon	271
Chapter 46: A New Path	275
Conclusion.....	281

Introduction

I never planned on a career in modeling.

Avocational interest inventory I took at fifteen stated I was best suited to be a hotel manager, police officer, or firefighter. I thought seriously about being a cosmetologist. And then, during my junior year, I won a spot on the Miller Hill Mall fashion panel in Duluth, and that led to a handful of modeling jobs.

At fifteen, I also landed in some Advanced Placement classes, and that eventually convinced me I could handle higher education. I enrolled in Bethel College at eighteen alongside my best friend, Stacy. I honored my parents' wish that I stay in-state my freshman year, but I couldn't wait to get out and see the world.

Traveling, new experiences, and my desire to gain independence led me to Auburn University in Alabama for my sophomore year. I had a rebellious streak, and I was on a mission to escape personal pain in my life. I was drowning my sorrows in drinking and wild living. My goal was to party hard and die young.

Thankfully, God had another plan.

Despite my crazy lifestyle, I declared a major in criminal justice my sophomore year. Drawn by the excitement of living life on the edge, I decided I wanted to work as a detective for the FBI. My dad, who worked

as a computer systems analyst for the US postal service, had sold me on the excellent benefits federal government employees receive.

However, my world turned upside down during my junior year at Auburn. I spent five weeks in Europe earlier that summer. I enjoyed sightseeing in Amsterdam and on the Spanish Riviera. but I also pushed my limits on partying during the course of the trip. God began to open my eyes and show me where my crazy lifestyle could lead, and I felt empty and hopeless.

I was twenty-one, and I hit rock bottom. My friend Annie saw my need and took me to church. There I met Jesus, and for the first time ever, I truly experienced His love and acceptance. In the best decision I have ever made, I accepted the salvation He offered, and I finally found the freedom I'd been looking for.

The trajectory of my life changed dramatically. People began telling me, at church and back home, "God is calling you, Amy. He has a great plan for your life." But I didn't know what that meant. Was I now supposed to enroll in Bible college and become a pastor or missionary or evangelist?

I'd always had a heart for kids and teens, and I'd been volunteering through Project Uplift (like a Big Brothers - Big Sisters program) since I'd arrived at Auburn. Once I gave my heart to Jesus, I wanted to help hurting teens like me. I decided to walk away from my goal of working with the FBI and instead began training to prevent young people from becoming criminals. I stayed in criminal justice but switched from law enforcement to youth services.

I did my internship in law enforcement since I was still torn between that and youth services. In my heart, however, I knew God was steering me in a new direction.

I also began training for triathlons during this time. I threw my energy into running, biking, and swimming—all of which were far healthier than the drinking, smoking, and partying I'd done before.

INTRODUCTION

I graduated from Auburn in 1994 and headed home to Minnesota, praying for direction for this *calling* people were still telling me I had. I learned I didn't need to be a student at the University of Minnesota–Duluth to be a part of the triathlon team there, so I joined. I also volunteered with the youth group at Cloquet Gospel Tabernacle (now Journey Christian Church) and counseled with the youth pastor, Phil Baker, and senior pastor, David Ogren.

Eventually, after much counsel and prayer, I decided to move to Chicago. I was envisioning being a youth pastor in the city, but God led me to Christian Life College in Mt. Prospect, located in the northwest suburbs of Chicago, instead. I was still a new Christian, and I needed to be grounded in my theology. There I met Eric, who would eventually become my husband. I continued to volunteer with a local youth group while earning my degree in pastoral studies.

After I graduated from Christian Life College, I managed a local teen center and continued my triathlon training. I did very well in competition and dreamed of going pro in the sport. And then, two separate accidents brought injuries that set me on different path.

I married Eric at twenty-six, entered modeling school at twenty-seven, and started my professional career at twenty-nine. I felt like I was jumping off a cliff as I began one of the biggest adventures of my life.

Chapter 1

Not Your Average Sunday

*Faith is taking the first step even when you
can't see the whole staircase.*

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

I stepped out onto the runway, and the spotlights blinded me. My feet were crammed into shoes that didn't belong to me and were a size too small, but I wore a beautiful designer garment, and I was on the arm of one of the most famous, sought-after hair stylists in the country. According to his assistant, I had just received a \$500 haircut. She had told me that news backstage as she did my nails and another assistant put on my makeup.

I felt like Esther from the Bible. Just like that unknown girl chosen to do something great, much to my disbelief, I'd been chosen in an audition. It was late September 2001, about a month shy of my thirtieth birthday. My modeling career was taking off, thanks to a boost from Frederic Fekkai.

I'd started the morning normally, going out to breakfast with my husband, Eric, and then to church. I said to him over pancakes, "I wonder if this is just another cattle call. There'll be so many models from different agencies. Do you think it's even worth it to go to this audition?"

"Hey, it never hurts to try," he reassured me. "If you don't knock on doors, they'll never open."

So after church, I drove downtown for my audition at a high-end hair salon on Michigan Avenue. I stood in line with many tall, thin, young, beautiful women. Knowing that I looked and seemed younger than my age gave me a surge of confidence as I observed the other models around me. I prayed for favor as I waited with these beauties to audition for the celebrity hair stylist.

After interviewing with Frederic and his assistant, I was told to wait to one side of the room with a handful of other models. Once the long line of auditioning hopefuls ended, Frederic's assistant walked over to us. "Ladies, Frederic has chosen you to be models for the hair show. Congratulations."

I was still basking in the glow of being chosen when the assistant started giving instructions. Words I did not expect trickled into my ears, and I realized she wasn't talking about the hair show that started the next day. "Reception . . . Navy Pier . . . cocktail dress . . . benefit . . . runway . . ."

Wait, did this job start *tonight*? My agent had only told me about the Monday show. I'd had a huge pancake breakfast, and my stomach felt bloated. I didn't have any of my modeling gear—shoe bag, makeup kit, or undergarments—in my car. My house was two hours away, and there was no way I could get those items in time for an evening show.

I felt the panic rise. I needed this job. I was helping Eric go back to college, and I was carrying the burden of being the main provider.

When the assistant finished talking and turned to walk away, I pulled my courage around me. I straightened my back, sucked in my tummy, and lifted my chin the way Mrs. Newport taught me in modeling school . . . and

then I went and groveled. I explained that I didn't have anything with me to work that night. I started to tell her about how my agent said the show was on Monday, but the assistant interrupted me.

"It's fine. We have things for you. Just be at Navy Pier by five. By the way, can you give Frederic a ride over there?"

Did she just hear me swallow hard? Can I give the world-famous stylist a ride in my filthy 1997 Pontiac Sunfire? I didn't know what to say. If I said yes, I'd die of embarrassment over the condition of the car. If I said no, my lack of flexibility and hospitality could cost me the job.

The assistant must have seen the consternation on my face. "You know, don't worry about it. We can get Frederic over there another way. I think he's just going to hop in a cab."

And just like that, God took care of me again.

The show at Navy Pier that night was a benefit for the firefighters and police officers in New York, as it was just a couple of weeks after 9/11. Uniformed men and women swarmed around the grand ballroom, mingling and sipping drinks as they talked in quiet tones. In the center of the room was the longest runway I had ever seen. It made Simi's runway at Union Station look small.

I was nervous but also excited. I felt blessed to be chosen and to have such a wonderful opportunity, yet I worried that I would not fit into the clothes or the shoes they were providing for me. I kept whispering prayers that everything would turn out okay.

I arrived onsite and was whisked right into the dressing room. The woman there literally turned up her nose at me. Clearly, I did not measure up to her standards. *Oh, well! Frederic picked me, and that's all that matters. You'll have to deal with it. I deserve to be here.*

She handed me my wardrobe and shoes, and one of Frederic's assistants escorted me backstage to get my hair and makeup done. Not only did those ladies make me look fabulous, but they gave me a pep talk as well. "You are so lucky to be his main haircut model."

“What?” I didn’t realize that other models weren’t all getting a haircut or even a style by him. Frederic Fekkai owned a salon in New York and did hair for many famous people.

God had chosen to grant me favor. That was the only explanation that made sense to me.

When the ladies finished with me, they directed me to Frederic’s station. I felt like I was walking on air. I floated over and sat down in his chair. He started to work his magic.

“Could you please part my hair over the left side of my face?” I asked. “I have a birthmark over here, and I always try to cover it with my bangs.”

“Sure, no problem. I can do that for you.”

As we were talking, a myriad of reporters, cameras, and microphones descended upon us. Frederic worked methodically and gracefully despite the bright lights and big crowd. The whole scene began to feel like a press conference, with reporters throwing questions to Frederic and jotting notes on pads. It reminded me of a crowd in New York City that had unexpectedly crushed in on me and some model friends one day, but this was even more intense. Frederic had just published a book, and it was creating quite the frenzy.

He told the reporters he was enjoying working on my hair because it was naturally blond. I had not colored my hair at that point.

“I like things fresh and natural. She has a fabulous hair color.”

I just smiled. *Thanks, Mom and Dad, for good genes.*

Eventually, the media frenzy died down. Frederic continued my haircut, and we had the chance to talk. We chatted about modeling, hair, his salon, and my own budding career. I’d only been working in the modeling industry for nine months, and I was plagued with concerns about my birthmark.

I pushed back my bangs, showed him my imperfection, and asked for his honest opinion. “You see a lot of beautiful and famous women. Do you think I should get this fixed? Will it make me more successful?”

God spoke through him that day. He said with his fabulous French accent, “Absolutely not. You are beautiful just like you are. You are a natural, and I barely notice that mark.”

“Really? You didn’t notice it?”

“No, I didn’t. I would not touch it or get it fixed. Just be yourself. You are beautiful, and you are going to do just fine as a model.”

I learned some valuable tips during that haircut, like how to create volume in my hair. “Back-combing or teasing your hair can be damaging,” Frederic told me. “Let me show you a healthier, easier way to create volume.” He took his fingers to my scalp under my hair and rubbed the crown with a circular motion. I tried it, too, and have used this trick on my hair ever since.

As we were talking, a producer walked over. “It’s show time!”

We all made our way backstage, and Frederic stayed with the models and calmed our nerves. He had a warm, laid-back manner, and his friendliness put me at ease.

Quite soon, it was time for us to go onstage. “Frederic, ladies, you’re on,” the producer said. The curtain opened, and we made our entrance onto the runway. I stood on the left side of Frederic, and another model stood on his right. The three of us walked down the runway arm in arm, stopping when the emcee approached us. He interviewed Frederic about his new book and about the haircut and style he had given me just moments before.

Toward the end of the show, all the models took the stage together. The models Frederic had chosen were joined by thirty or so others, showcasing various designers. We all wore white dresses that had a portion of the flag on the dress and the train. Each model held the train of the model in front of her, and when we walked single file, we looked like a giant American flag blowing in the breeze. The designers had done a fabulous job creating that visual, timely piece of art, and I felt blessed

and patriotic to be on the runway with such an ethnically diverse group of women. We were truly a reflection of America.

The encouragement and advice I received that night gave me the boost, inspiration, and confirmation I needed to navigate the ups and downs of the industry. I knew I was on the right path.

The following day, the models chosen by Team Fekkai worked at a hair show specifically arranged to help Frederic promote his new book as well as his salon and hair products.

About six months later, I received a call from my agent, Anne. “Do you want to work for Frederic Fekkai again at the Midwest Beauty Show?”

“Do I? Of course! I’m so glad he asked me back.”

At the end of that show, I gave Frederic a small gift of thanks, to let him know how much I appreciated the encouragement and opportunities he had given me. Not only was I paid well, but he and his staff showed me great respect.

That was the last time I saw Frederic, as he only traveled for about a year to promote his book. He came alongside me while I was young and inexperienced, and he showed me I could accomplish significant things if I stayed true to myself, kept believing, and didn’t give up. I felt like a little girl clunking on the keys of a piano, while a master pianist sits next to her, playing an amazing melody that incorporates her feeble attempts at a tune. I am thankful our paths crossed at such a pivotal time in my life and career.