

Women Who Say Yes to the Spark

A Story Series by Angie Thompson

Published October 2026 | AngieThompsonConsulting.com

The Work Behind the Shine

By Wednesday, Tricia Phillips may already be pulling a horse trailer toward Coffeyville.

Inside is Zona, her thirteen-year-old palomino quarter horse. Tyra Jean, Tricia's five-year-old blue heeler, is along for the ride, too, tongue hanging out as she keeps watch over the truck and trailer. Around her neck is a tooled leather collar that matches Tricia's belt.

During the summer, one barrel race can lead to another, Wednesday through Saturday. The trailer has living quarters because sometimes the road between home and the next arena becomes home for the night. It is a rhythm she has known most of her life.

She was ten years old when her parents bought her first horse, a young paint named Joe. He was green, not yet trained as a barrel horse. She was learning, too.

“When a horse trusts you, they can become your best friend if they want to be.”

Her parents hauled her to junior rodeos across Oklahoma. During the school year, rodeos filled the weekends. In summer, the schedule could stretch to seven days a week. Some of the young competitors she met became lifelong friends.

More than three decades later, Joe is 31 years old, enjoying his days at the Phillips' ranch. His rodeo days are behind him now, but the friendship remains.

A Childhood Built Around Doing

Growing up on ten acres in Copan, Oklahoma, meant being surrounded by family, animals and many of the same friends she had known since grade school. There was softball, family deer hunts and days spent outdoors. In junior high and high school, she showed sheep and cattle through 4-H and FFA. Horses remained a constant.

As a little girl, she imagined becoming a veterinarian. She loved animals, loved raising them and especially loved training horses. The idea of someday having to euthanize



Tricia Phillips & Tyra Jean

an animal changed her mind, but her fascination with training never left.

She loved watching the moment when an animal began to understand what was being asked of it.

“It's like a kid. You can see their disposition change ... when they finally learn, “This is what I am being asked to do.””

Tricia likes progress. She likes goals. And she likes watching someone discover what she is capable of doing.

An Entrepreneur by Nature

Those instincts eventually followed her into work. She earned her cosmetology license, became a licensed real

estate agent and continued her education before graduating from Oklahoma Wesleyan University with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration with an emphasis in accounting.

"I've always been an entrepreneur."

Mary Kay entered her life for a much simpler reason. A woman she knew was trying to reach a goal and asked Tricia to join her team. She agreed to help, with the added benefit that she and her mother could receive a discount on products.

For nearly a year, she didn't do much with it. Then she began working the business a few days a week and discovered those few hours could generate meaningful income.

Tricia's signature pink jacket



"I started to help a lady out, and I stayed because the money is great."

More than sixteen years later, the financial opportunity

is still real. But when she talks about what she enjoys most about the work, the conversation doesn't stay on money for long. It turns to the women, their goals and what happens when someone begins to believe she can reach one.

When Success Becomes Someone Else's

The goals haven't stopped.

"Goal setting in life is a gift."

Her achievements are easy to see. Over the years, she has qualified for ten Mary Kay cars and earned repeated *Queen's Court of Sharing* recognition. The pink Chanel jacket, diamond bee pins and other recognition represent milestones along the way.

They are a striking contrast to the other Tricia: jeans, horses, a trailer with living quarters and Tyra Jean tagging along. Both belong to her.

"People see the hype. They don't always see the process. There are steps required."

Ask what keeps women in the business, though, and she doesn't talk about cars or diamonds.

"Those who stay, it is confidence. They see they reach their goals."

Years of leading women have also taught her that helping someone doesn't always begin with advice.

"Listen more than coach. The majority of people just want to be heard."

"People see the hype. They don't always see the process. There are steps required."

For a woman who readily describes herself as driven, learning when to listen has become part of the work. She also knows what it means to have people beside you when you are working toward something difficult.

The People Who Believed First

She had those people early.

Her parents loaded horses, drove countless miles and spent weekends, and sometimes entire summer weeks, helping a daughter who wanted to rodeo. Family wasn't the only source of strength she would carry into adulthood. Faith was there, too.

She grew up attending a small church in Bowring, where her uncle was the pastor. In her early twenties, a friend invited her to City Church in Bartlesville on Easter. The worship and preaching connected with her in a new way, and City Church became a place where she would find friendship, counsel and support.

She had watched her mother rely on faith when her father suffered a heart attack: "You

pray your way through it.”

There would be times when she had to do the same. She lost a horse in a freak accident. A long-term relationship ended abruptly. Women from her church listened, counseled and helped her through difficult periods.

“I don’t know how people make it without faith.”

A friend gave her a copy of *Jesus Calling* when she was in her twenties. She still uses the devotional every morning, reading, praying and reflecting before the day’s goals and appointments take over.

“Spend the first ten minutes being at peace. It makes a difference.”

Still Running

And she still barrel races.

Today, the horse beneath her is Zona. Her parents still come when they can. Friends still gather around the arena. Tyra Jean goes wherever she goes,

rarely far from her feet.

The rodeo circuit and the pink Chanel jacket may seem to belong to different worlds. For her, there is room for both. Neither happened without the work behind it.

These days, much of her satisfaction comes from watching other women take those steps for themselves. The woman who once signed up for Mary Kay to help someone else reach a goal now spends much of her time helping women reach their own.

When asked what she hopes the people who know her best remember about her someday, she doesn’t mention the recognition, the cars or the diamond bees. She hopes they remember that she worked hard, that she was fair and faithful.

And that, on any given day, she tried to “shine God’s light on someone.”



Tricia & Zona



Faithful side-kick, Tyra Jean

About Tricia Phillips

Tricia Phillips is a Copan, Oklahoma, entrepreneur, Mary Kay Independent Sales Director and lifelong horsewoman. She has spent more than sixteen years building her business, encouraging other women and pursuing the goals that continue to move her forward.

About Angie Thompson

Angie Thompson is a Bartlesville-based writer, storyteller and consultant. She created *Women Who Say Yes to the Spark* to share the stories of women whose choices, courage and commitment make a difference in the lives of others.



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