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Novelist Motivated by Loss of Voice

PALO ALTO, California (November 6, 2012) – Marcia Kemp Sterling, author of *One Summer in Arkansas*, was mid-stride in a successful law career when her voice developed an unexplained tremor with sudden loss of pitch, leaving an impression of fear or distress when she spoke. She had just left behind a partnership position at a prominent Silicon Valley law firm to take the reigns as general counsel of the legal department of a Fortune 1000 software company.

“It’s the last thing in the world a female executive needs,” said Sterling, recounting her dismay as she began to experience voice problems. “Holding your own around a conference table requires good ideas and confidence, but you need some volume in your vocal cords as well. I had no idea what was going on.”

After months of following one dead end after another, from speech therapy to acupuncture to counseling, Sterling was finally diagnosed with spasmodic dysphonia, a neurological condition causing spasming of the vocal cords.

Sterling had graduated from Stanford Law School as a single parent of two young children and worked her way up through the ranks as Silicon Valley grew into an economic engine. “I felt like I still had things to say,” Sterling says. “With a failing voice, I had to find other ways to communicate.”

It wasn’t the first time Sterling had to change course in the face of sudden loss. “After my children were born, I really wanted to be a stay-at-home mom. When my marriage ended, I was forced out of my comfort zone because I had to find a way to support the children.”

She entered Stanford Law School as a single mom at a time when older students were rare. “I was lucky to get into Stanford and then lucky again to be right here on the San Francisco Peninsula when our bedroom community turned into Silicon Valley,” she adds.

Sterling’s career as a lawyer started just as the first high tech companies were going public. She became expert in counseling start-up companies, structuring venture capital deals and mergers and taking one company after another public in the 80s and 90s as the stock market soared.

“You’ve got to keep moving ahead in the face of loss,” she says as she recounts her loss of voice. “I was sad and frustrated when I developed SD. But everyone faces loss at some point in their lives. And there’s never a loss without something new being created out of the devastation.”

One Summer in Arkansas, though fictional, picks up threads of the author's life experience—roots in the South, a law career, a personal struggle between the social and religious values of two very different parts of the country.

Sterling's novel is available through New Shelves Distribution, Ingram, Baker & Taylor, Amazon and the author's website at www.MarciaKempSterling.com.

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