

BIO FOR CHERRY BOONE O'NEILL

Cherry Boone O'Neill was the eldest daughter born to singer and entertainer, Pat Boone, and his wife, Shirley, daughter of country western singer, Red Foley. She grew up in an entertainment family which later became an entertain-ING family, The Pat Boone Family. With her three sisters, she recorded numerous albums for both the secular and Gospel market, and one of their albums was nominated for a Grammy for Best Gospel Album. The family travelled all over the country and the world, entertaining on stage, on television programs like The Glen Campbell Show, The Flip Wilson Show, The Dinah Shore Show, and the Mike Douglas and Merv Griffin, and the family even starred in four of their own ABC-produced Holiday Specials in the late 1970's.

However, underneath the smiles and songs, Cherry was struggling with the very serious eating disorders, anorexia and bulimia, before most people even knew what they were. She battled these conditions for ten years, and with the help of her family, her husband, Dan O'Neill, and a psychiatrist who had been ahead of the curve in treating anorexia, she was able to overcome them and was the first person to write a very personal account of battling with and overcoming these deadly disorders. Her book became a New York Times Best Seller in 1982, launching her on an extensive book tour the United States, Australia and New Zealand. She appeared on shows like The Today Show, Good Morning America, Nightline, The Phil Donahue Show, Sally Jess Rafael, and even The Richard Simmons Show, sharing her story of illness and recovery.

Cherry married Dan O'Neill in 1975, who went on to found and serve as an executive with Mercy Corps, an international relief and development agency, for the past 40 years, becoming one of the most well-respected organizations of its kind in the world, with work in nearly 50 countries and with over 3,500 staff. After her battle with eating disorders, Cherry was told she might never have children due to the ravages inflicted on her body, but Cherry has raised five children here in Washington State---Brittany, 37, Brendan, 35, Casey, 32, Kevyn, 29, and Kylie, 26. In raising her children, she encountered her own inherited genetic tendency towards depression, which she has been successfully treating for the past 35 years. She also learned about ADD/ADHD, as three of her children were diagnosed with the condition, learning differences, mood disorders, which have affected every member of her family, substance abuse and addiction in two of her children, and has dealt with her husband's depression and PTSD, as well as suicidal ideation and attempts made by two members of her family.

Cherry has always believed in taking the proverbial lemons life hands you and making the best possible lemonade to share with others. She shared her battle with eating disorders in order to share her story of victory with the world through her book, *Starving for Attention*. She used her experiences with ADD/ADHD and learning differences to serve as the Lake Washington School District's Special Needs Committee Secretary for

5 years, creating the first district wide newsletter to be distributed to every school in the district. She used her experience with raising kids who struggled with substance use and abuse to create a Parent Networking Group, which she ran for 18 consecutive years. She designed and ran a program at Inglewood Junior High (now, Middle School) called DATA Week (Drug, Alcohol, and Tobacco Awareness Week) to educate young students about the potential consequences of experimenting with drugs and alcohol. She served on the ATOD (Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs) Committee of the Lake Washington School District for three years, to connect her knowledge and experience with those in authority at the District Level. She served on the Advisory Committee for Eastlake High School for three of its early years and volunteered at her church with the junior high and high school youth programs for over a dozen years. She created a PTSA sponsored program in 2002 called "What Works: Stories From the Front Lines of Raising Young Teens", which spanned two school districts, used the Parent Education money from 14 different schools and was underwritten by the teachers and counselors in the LWSD as they received continuing education units for participating, and had a record-breaking 400 parents and teachers in attendance on a Friday night at a PTSA event! She won a state-wide PTSA award for producing that event.

Since raising her five children, Cherry has since used more of her lemon-like experiences, when her youngest daughter attended a therapeutic boarding school for 16 months to learn about the important of life coaching, especially for young people coming out of a boarding school, rehab or treatment program, and enrolled in a 10-month Coaching Academy, became a Certified Transformational Life Coach, and started a Life Coaching business called Active Transformation in 2008. She has been able to use her many life experiences, as well as her professional training and a 5-Course Capstone Certification she received in Positive Psychology through the University of Pennsylvania in 2017, to work with people who desire to make a change in their lives through working with a professional coach for the past 10 years. In addition to her work, she has continued to pursue other passions, because she believes she must walk the talk that she encourages for her clients. She performed as an acting troupe member and comedy sketch writer for Business Theatre Live, which was promoted as "Ted Talks meets Saturday Night Live", which lasted for three years in Bellevue. Then, she continued to pursue her newly re-sparked love of acting and comedy by signing with a local talent agency and she has been attending acting, improv and comedy classes for the past two years. She has even appeared in a few local commercials!

Cherry continues to develop as a person, a mother and now a grandmother of two granddaughters, pursuing her passions, continuing to assist others through some of the struggles she has overcome, and in embracing new adventures as often as possible!