



## SherriCoale

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I grew up about 30 minutes to the right side of the Red River in a small southern Oklahoma town that had a bunch of churches, a few places to eat, and one stoplight that felt pretty unnecessary most of the time.

In the 4th grade, I was introduced to basketball, and by the 5th grade I had fallen in love with it. Before I knew it, the game had become the road map for my life. As the first female basketball All-Stater at Healdton High School, I headed for Oklahoma Christian College on a full scholarship with the goal of getting a degree in education so that I could coach and teach. Four years later, I graduated from OC with a piece of paper that said I could do just that. And so I did...for a long, long time.

My first job was at Edmond Memorial High School where I was an assistant basketball coach and a senior English teacher. I taught six classes a day without a planning period, coached basketball, drove the bus for games, and helped out with the volleyball team on the side. For those duties, I was compensated, roughly, 37 cents an hour. I thought I had died and gone to Heaven. Two years later I took the head girls' basketball job at Norman... seven years and a couple of State Championships later, I became the proverbial coaching poster child as I was named the head coach at the University of Oklahoma, with zero collegiate coaching experience, at the age of 31.

During my 25 years on college basketball's biggest stage, our teams won multiple Big 12 championships, qualified for 19 straight NCAA tournaments, and earned our way into three Final Fours. I had the privilege of coaching 4 All-Americans, 14 WNBA draft selections, and a whole bunch of remarkable women who reward me still with their lives.

In addition to working the Oklahoma sideline, I had the extraordinary opportunity to participate in USA Basketball as an assistant coach in 2001 and as the head coach in the 2013 World University Games where our squad defeated Russia on their home floor to bring home the gold. From small-town Oklahoma to our state's flagship institution to ports across the world, the game of basketball has been the vehicle of my life.





# LEARNING LEADER

But words have always ridden shotgun, never very far away.

I'm the girl who wishes she had 37 lives. In my previous one—this major college basketball journey that lasted a quarter of a century—I used to get asked all the time, “What would you be doing if you weren't doing this?” My answer wasn't the same as Luke Combs'. I wouldn't be “Doin' This”. I would be doing all kinds of other things. I had a list.

So when I walked away from basketball, I did so with intention. Coaching was a beautiful, hard, rewarding, draining, amazing, fulfilling, incredible job that rarely felt like work. It was more fun than fun most days and I live grateful for the journey. But the things on the list were calling.

The one making the most racket was “write.”

A writing life may seem to lie somewhere on the other side of the moon from a life in athletics, but the two are scary and similar in the things that they require. They're both ridiculously hard, even if they sometimes look easy. And the reward for either isn't what you get at the end, it's what you go through to get there. The process in both is the prize.

In addition to writing, I'm doing lots of public speaking, some consulting, and a lot of chasing my granddaughter around and around the room. I play tennis, work in the garden, and typically can be found reading three or four books at a time.

I'm married to a very patient fisherman who's been my partner for 35 years. Our nest is empty, but our lives are full. We have two kids who like each other and us, still. That feels a lot like a touchdown though the game of raising children never really ends. We also have one daughter-in-law—a beautiful added value—and an amazing granddaughter who holds me in the palm of her tiny little hand.

Blessings are everywhere I look...

