



Casey Wohl: The Getaway Girl

Author Casey Wohl was born and raised in Central Florida and lived in a “quiet, small” town where her family owned their own orange grove and cattle ranch. “The background kept me grounded. It was an independent lifestyle,” said Wohl. The citrus industry would stay with Wohl into her adult years.

by Stephanie Romanello

Wohl attended Rollins College as an undergraduate and later became a student at the University of Florida where she graduated with a master’s degree in communications. She used her education to become an award-winning public relations practitioner dealing in crisis and issue management. Wohl says she often flew back and forth between Orlando and Washington, D.C. for her job. And although she enjoyed the experience of “dealing with the media and helping people learn about the industry,” her frequent absences to nation’s capital caused her marriage to end. Wohl was divorced in February 2007 and then lost her job.

Not long after, Wohl and her close girlfriends decided to enjoy a night out. The women went to a “paint your own pottery” place where you choose a ceramic piece and decorate it. Wohl found a platter that said “Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.” Wohl was inspired. She now lives by the quote, and

put her own spin on it — “it doesn’t matter how long we live, but what we do with the life we’re given.” So she started on a new journey.

Because of her college education and early interest in creative subjects such as English, Wohl felt like she had been writing forever. Her first published book came from a compilation of experiences with her friends and with the citrus industry. Wohl recalls the “girls’ getaways” that she and her close friends embarked on during college. Every month or so the group traveled somewhere to “have new experiences.” The girls’ getaways continued into her adult life.

Because of her love of traveling, as well as her job’s requirement for it, Wohl said she was able to learn about the various hangouts, restaurants and attractions within cities like Orlando. As Orlando changed, Wohl was able to keep her girlfriends updated on places like new hotels and hot spots for after-dinner drinks.

While on plane rides between Washing-

ton, D.C. and Orlando, Wohl was often asked by passengers about the best places to go in Orlando. While she acknowledged most tourists had Disney World first in their mind, she often shared her secrets by writing down lesser-known places on napkins and giving them to fellow passengers.

To enjoy her travels to distant cities, Wohl read books about whatever area she would be visiting. She hoped the books would provide information on interesting places to go, but felt they never provided any specific places to just hang out or eat



on your own. The books fell short of what she felt she needed as a traveler, and a woman.

"I wanted to write a new chapter in my life." With all the knowledge and exciting experiences Wohl had, she felt it was time for her to share it with other women. But Wohl wasn't finished getting information yet. Wohl says she went out and explored Orlando, doing a lot of research on the area. She says one of her sources for information was everyday people from the area. "I love talking to locals," said Wohl. "I go to restaurants and talk to waitresses."

She believes that if you want to know where to get a great massage, you should always ask a local who enjoys a day at the spa where she can get one. Wohl's first book, *Girl's Getaway Guide: Leave Your Baggage at Home*, explored the Orlando area. It details outdoor activities, various hotels and restaurants for "any taste," a guide to the nightlife and where the best spas are located.

When Wohl finished it, she wasn't sure how to go about getting published. "I didn't pitch my book to a publisher or an agent," said Wohl. Even though she knows going to a publisher could have been easier, her vision for the book was so important that she didn't want anyone to change it. "Publishers would want it to be their way," she said. Her friends encouraged her to publish her book herself.



Wohl created Graydog Publishing, named after her own dog, who she regrets "couldn't come on our girls' getaways." Wohl self-published *Girl's Getaway Guide: Leave Your Baggage at Home* in September 2007. The positive response surprised her. "It's really resonating with people." The book has been bought by women of all ages, from college girls to older mothers. Many of whom purchase it for a family member or friend.

Little did Wohl know her book would help some women with more than just traveling. At a recent book signing she was speechless when a widow explained that the *Guide* helped her heal and move on with her life. Wohl also had a divorced woman tell her she didn't know what to

do and how to have a social life anymore until she purchased Wohl's book. "If I can help one person not to feel how I did, then I am happy. It's why I do it."

And the tagline "leave your baggage at home" doesn't refer to luggage. Get rid of the head clutter and go by yourself. We just get caught up in our everyday lives, involved with career," Wohl said. "I think as women we sometimes forget to take care of ourselves."

But Wohl's concern for others does not stop with her books and trips. Wohl was recently involved with Fantasy Fest in Key West and was able to host the first annual pirate-themed "Booty Party" with a bachelor and bachelorette auction. All the money raised was donated to the

Woman Kind Organization, a non-profit group that donates money to women who cannot afford healthcare.

With help from her book, Wohl is able to organize girls' getaways all over the country, spreading them to almost 20 cities. She now also works as a resident expert on girls' getaways at the Gaylord Palms Resort.

Wohl's second installment to the series was just released October 2008. The second *Girl's Getaway Guide* details Key West, exploring restaurants such as Blue Heaven and sailboat tours including an ocean air wine tasting.

Wohl is currently working on a guide for Nashville, Tennessee and enjoys writing about cities that fly "under the radar." *The Girl's Getaway Guide to Nashville* will be released spring of 2009.

Even though she's had some hardship in her life, she stays positive. She often quotes an old proverb, "It's not the number of times you fall down in life, but the number of times you get back up." Wohl is continuing her journey in writing, and hopes one day there will be a *Girl's Getaway Guide* for every city she visits.

