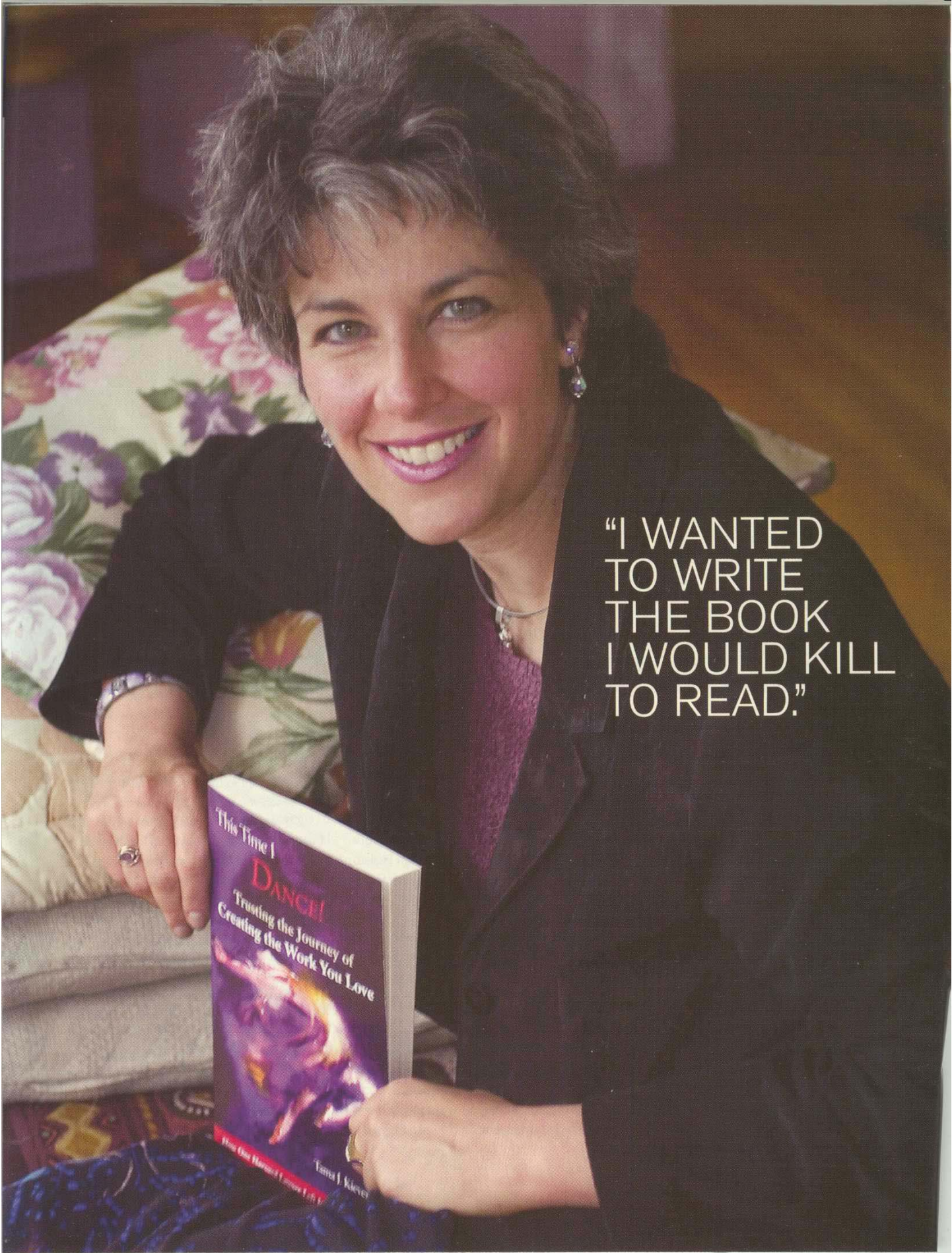
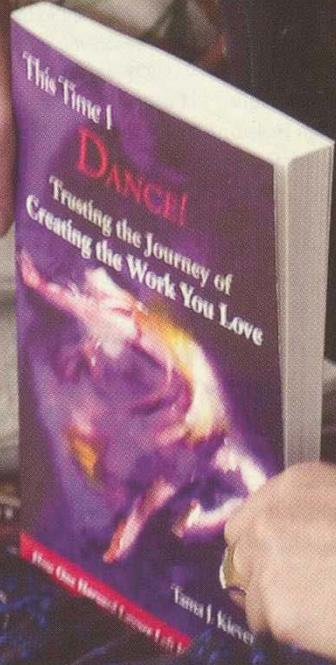


“I WANTED  
TO WRITE  
THE BOOK  
I WOULD KILL  
TO READ.”



## THE DREAM

To be a writer.

### THE LAWYER:

**Tama J. Kieves**

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J.D., Harvard Law School, 1985 • B.A. in

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# Tama J. Kieves

### THE STORY:

**T**ama Kieves grew up in a family where you were expected to “become either a lawyer or an accountant, or to marry one.” Her decision to major in something as “fluffy” as literature nearly caused a family rift. Although she reveled in her four undergraduate years of reading, writing, discussing and imagining, as graduate school approached she felt that it was time she make a practical career decision. And that’s how she landed at Harvard Law School.

Three very tough years later, having graduated with honors, she was a prized new associate at a big Denver law firm. “I decided that I could tolerate law school and then, once I was a lawyer, writing could be my hobby. Ultimately, I learned that wasn’t possible.”

Kieves received excellent performance reviews and was told that, if she kept it up, she would find herself on the way to partnership. Believe it or not, she found that troubling. Did she really want to be a partner in a law firm? Did she even want to be a lawyer at all? On the other side of a period of depression and anxiety, she knew what the answer was: a resounding *no*. What Kieves wanted was to be free of the need to “curtail herself,” free of the necessity to “stuff myself into pantyhose, pumps and pretense every morning.” She left law practice and embarked on a personal journey to live her original dream: to be a writer and an artist. As one law firm colleague commented at the time, “If you’re this successful doing work you don’t love, imagine what you could do with work you do love!”

The first step on her new path was a job waiting tables.

Today, Kieves is the best-selling author of *This Time I Dance!: Trusting the Journey of Creating the Work You Love* (Tarcher/Penguin), as well as a creativity and life/work coach presenting seminars and retreats nationwide. In a time when so many people are unhappy in their occupations, Kieves sees herself as helping others express what they love through work. In particular, she enjoys working with lawyers. “They are verbal and smart. It is possible that I am just drawn to those who are like me, but it seems to me there are so many lawyers who are creative and visionary and want to make a difference.”

**Helping Hands?** “A Course in Miracles” (a spiritual program) helped me learn to make decisions out of love instead of fear. This was a new way of thinking for me.”

**Lessons Learned?** “I decided to write the book I would kill to read. It took me 12 years to write it. Once, I even erased the whole manuscript off my hard drive, by mistake, and had to start all over again. I had this instinct to self-publish the book and write it exactly the way I wanted. And then, when it launched and quickly made the best-seller list in my hometown, I received a surprising e-mail message out of the blue: ‘This is your fairy godmother,’ it began. She was a former VP at Random House and wanted to help me get my book published. I ended up with a major contract. The lesson? Listen to that inner voice that tells you what to do.”

**What’s Next?** There’s a second book in the works. This time, Kieves says, the subject matter is “how to keep your heart and soul intact once you launch your dream into the real world.”