

# A Q-and-A with a 'half-assed hussy'

**Local author Diana Kirk discusses her book and what it means to be a 'bad-ass woman'**

By DAN HAAG  
FOR COASTWEEKEND

**D**iana Kirk's book, "Licking Flames: Tales of a Half-Assed Hussy," is a personal, irreverent collection of essays about family, travel, sex, adventure and poking fun at everyday hypocrisy.

Kirk, a new Astoria resident, has been published in *The Progressive* and has a regular column on "The Psychology of It" and "Five:2:One," a literary magazine.

Eager to learn more, Coast Weekend sat down with Kirk for a chat. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

**Coast Weekend: How would you describe your book?**

**Diana Kirk:** I consider it a book of personal essays with a feminist twist. An intentional part of the book was showing a girl/woman making her own choices. I would describe it as a memoir of parts of my life, where epiphanies happened and moments in time clashed together, and there was either a learning experience on my own or I grew in some way.

**CW: So what is a "half-assed hussy?"**

**DK:** I often ask people what they think a hussy is. The word "hussy" comes from the German word "house," meaning "wife." Hussy was like "little wife," which has a connotation of a loud-mouthed little wife.

I love the word because we often turn women who speak loudly into whores. I love the word because it's used incorrectly from what it originally was. And "half-assed" is because I'm kind of half-assed about a lot of things. Even me being a loud-mouth: I'm not the most loud-mouthed.

**CW: What makes it easy for you to talk about things people don't always talk about?**

**DK:** My mom was really social and allowed me freedom to be around adults. I grew up in this world of adults that allowed me to speak my mind. That fostered this ability to be very confident. I'm sometimes wrong in arguments, but I'm not broken by being wrong; I like to learn from them. I want to talk about all subjects, and I'm curious about people's responses.

I'm often quite surprised at their reactions, that they're more scared to speak their minds, especially women. If I can be the woman who speaks up, maybe they'll see that you don't die from your words.

**CW: You recently had a class you were going to teach, "How to Write Like a Bad-Ass Woman," canceled for you not being the "correct" description of a "bad-ass woman." (They defined it as "vulnerable and compassionate.") How do you describe a "bad-ass woman?"**

**DK:** I think any woman who isn't scared of the repercussions of what she says. We've been silenced for so long, and I think this is a brave new world that we're in now, where women are speaking up, but we kind of still don't know what that means. Even I'm not sure I would describe a bad-ass woman as anything in particular.

I am a real estate investor by day, and I have



COLIN MURPHEY/THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Author Diana Kirk enjoys a cocktail at an establishment in Astoria.



**MAYBE MY DESCRIPTION OF A BAD-ASS WOMAN WOULD BE A WOMAN WHO KEEPS GOING — WHO DOESN'T BECOME BITTER FROM ALL THE OUTSIDE INFLUENCES THAT ARE ALWAYS TRYING TO CHANGE YOU, OR PUT YOU IN A BOX OF WHAT SOCIETY EXPECTS**