

Toastmasters Treasures...Profiles in Performance

by Peggy Lynn, CTM/CL, PR Reporter

Sometimes following your dreams can take on a life of its own! District 22 Secretary Sandra Campbell, ATMS, has discovered just that! Sandra is an avid public speaker going back over twenty years - before women were even allowed in Toastmasters! Years ago there were "Toastmistresses." However, as soon as the door opened for women, Sandra LEAPed across the threshold joining the ranks of the Toastmasters! She has been a member ever since - even becoming the Charter President of Temple Toastmasters in 1995. She is truly a TREASURE in our midst! This Kansas City, Kansas native's love of public speaking seems nearly seamless, being encouraged throughout her life long career with the Federal Aviation Agency. As a youngster she was even encouraged by a great "storytelling Grandpa!" Success, however, develops when preparation meets opportunity. Sandra's public speaking skills were honed in Toastmaster type environments and opportunities came through that and her evolving management position. Using her writing skills, speaking acumen and charismatic nature mixed into a perfect blend, Sandra developed an inspiring "Follow Your Dreams" program nearly by accident though!

In 1995, because of her strong support of Women in Aviation International, the FAA asked Sandra to stand in for Bessie Coleman, the first African-American female pilot, in a hall of fame induction ceremony. None of Bessie's family still living was able to attend the ceremony in her stead so naturally, Sandra obliged. Standing in for Bessie literally changed Sandra's life forever! Whether the spirit of Bessie overcame her or just overtook her, no one will really know for sure.



Not even Sandra Campbell. All we know now is that Bessie is alive again through Sandra's presentations: "Follow Your Dreams - The Bessie Coleman Story." That day back in '95 standing in for Bessie, Sandra began the journey to learn more about this extraordinary woman who fought the odds in chasing her dream. For instance, women were not allowed pilot's licenses in 1920's America so Bessie earned money as a hairdresser getting herself to France to study becoming an aviatrix. The more Sandra learned, the more she loved Bessie's story and thought it worthy of being told to the masses - especially urban youth. Sandra had previously aligned a partnership in education with the FAA and several area schools. Now she decided she would tell about Bessie Coleman the next time out to one of the schools - though that didn't happen right away.

It was nearly a year later when a KC school, really struggling with truancy problems and low test scores asked Sandra to "awaken" their students. Her previous experiences helping to organize career days for the student's knowledge and inspiration struck Sandra like lightning with the idea that these kids needed to hear from Bessie herself! She called around and finally found a 1920's uniform similar to what Bessie would've worn. Then she sat down and wrote about 40 pages of notes from two books she had on Bessie Coleman. The one-woman play was born. Phoenix rising. Preparation and opportunity on its path to greet success! Before she presented the work to the students at school, Sandra modeled the costume, with her briefcase of notes nearby, at her FAA staff meeting and was well on her way to making Bessie Coleman come alive for any who listened. The audiences seemed totally captivated! By the time she returned to her office she had four messages from people either wanting to hear more or to give her more, adding to authentic costuming with things like a helmet and goggles. Sandra Campbell has perfected and performed the Bessie Coleman story several hundred times now all over the country - including Bessie's Texas home town which gave

Sandra "the royal treatment!" Kansas City Public Television picked up her presentation after one member saw a performance at the Gem Theater in the historic jazz district and called KCPT's president with a rave review. KCPT recorded it as a VHS videotape. Sandra as Bessie, or Bessie as Sandra perhaps, inspires and delights audiences everywhere to go for it - to follow their dreams and become what their hearts desire! No excuses need apply. The preparation of Sandra's skills meeting the opportunity to tell this story, delivering the message to the masses has ensured Sandra Campbell's success as an educational entertainer!

Sandra has many more accomplished accolades attached to her name in the realm of education and helping others achieve their goals like being

an adjunct professor at Webster University teaching management to masters candidates. There is too little space to name everything so you will just have to ask her yourself! The name "Sandra" does mean "helper of mankind" so be prepared! Her email address is Scamp14469@aol.com. Sandra Campbell is now performing her one woman show called "Follow Your Dreams: the Bessie Coleman Story" about this simple and forthright, dynamic woman in American history brought to life again with each of Sandra's unique performances. Mission, Kansas, at the Mission Mall's Rainbow's End Theatre is the spot currently offering her play suitable for any audience through early November. Catch it if you can - you'll be glad you did!