

## Randy Thomas' Field of Dreams by Don Barrett

(August 18, 2008) Randy Thomas has a special kind of good luck. She always seems to be in the right place at the right time. Even when things are looking bleak after being fired, Randy just moves forward. What's so inspiring about her life and career is how much she has accomplished with this luck ... and her amazing talent.

Randy Thomas shared this serendipitous good luck in one of the most inspiring keynote speeches ever heard from a radio talent. Her escalator is always going up, even when on the outside it looks hopeless.

The ever-positive Randy Thomas shared her story on a recent Saturday afternoon at the Voice 2008 Convention, a gathering of voiceover talent held at the Hyatt Century City Plaza. She spent an hour and a half with an enthralled audience in the main ballroom. She crossed out the title of her session - which was originally "Women in Voiceover" - and launched into an uplifting and inspiring speech about "Living the Dream." And has she ever. (Photo taken by CeCe Canton)

Randy has certainly lived the dream that has taken her from an all-night dj in Detroit to being the first female announcer at the Academy Awards telecast, which she has done seven times. Since then, she embarked on an active voiceover career that includes announcing the Emmys, Tonys and American Film Institute telecast, among so many others. For the past three years, she's also been the voice of CBS Television Distribution's Entertainment Tonight and The Insider, the most watched entertainment news programs in the world.

Two of Randy's best friends joined her on-stage, both equally inspiring. Martha Quinn started an incredible journey as one of the first vj's at MTV. Arielle Ford, author of The Soulmate Secret: How To Manifest the Love of Your Life With the Law of Attraction, has been a long-time friend of Randy's.

Randy asked her audience, "What does your dream look like?" She told the crowd about growing up with a mom who was married seven times. Randy found solace with her AM transistor radio listening to far off stations in New York and Chicago. "I was a radio geek. I memorized the surveys, but didn't think I could ever be

a dj because there were no women so my dream was to become an actress. "

Randy was born in New York and grew up in Detroit. From an early age she wanted to be an actress. She set out for New York at age 17 with an enormous zest for life and waited on tables at Howard Johnson's at 46th & Broadway while she studied acting at the famed HB Studios. The problem for Randy was there were other aspiring actresses waiting on tables that were triple threats - they could sing, act and dance. "I was an OK actress, but I can't sing and really can't dance, so with two out of three was not great," she confided.

Her dream turned to radio while listening to WNEW-New York and the "Nightbird," Alison Steele. "We lost Allison about ten years ago," said Randy.

She packed her bags and headed home to Detroit where she went to community college and heard the campus radio station. She was told there were no women on the air. "I understand there are no women on the air, okay, but how do I get on the air here?" She was told to get an FCC license and she did. She went back to the campus station and started her journey.

"My dream was to be a dj and I was one of the first women on the air in Detroit," she said. "I was being embraced by program directors, fellow jocks, most of which were men, and they took me under their wing and supported that dream of mine," said Randy.

She eventually went to work at WPLJ-New York followed by KZEW-Dallas. Randy then worked at 'Zeta 4,' WAXY and WSHE in South Florida, before finally arriving in Los Angeles at KMET, KMPC/fm, KEDG, KLIT and KTWV - the WAVE. "I feel the universe puts you exactly where you're supposed to be. I say dream big, then see what the universe delivers to you. We have a room full of people with dreams and you must dream for yourself. Before you leave today you are going to have a visceral feeling of what you will feel like when your dream comes true that will enable you to press forward in order to get to that place." (Photo: Arielle Ford, Peter Rofe [NY voice actor and coach], Randy Thomas, and Martha Quinn. Photo by CeCe Canton)

During her time in South Florida, Randy worked for the King Brothers (Roger and Michael) founders of King World, the distributors for Oprah and Dr. Phil, among

other hit tv shows. In 1976, she couldn't get a job on the radio in South Florida, so Randy hosted the all-night show on Channel 51 playing bad B movies and asking Dick Powell and Myrna Loy trivia questions. During the day she sold advertising. Channel 51 was an UHF station, long before cable tv became part of the landscape. "If the potential client didn't receive UHF stations, I brought along a round UHF antenna and hooked it up to the back of their set."

Years later, Randy married her best friend Arnie Wohl. Together they have a daughter, Rachel, who was born in 1997. The eleven-year-old sat at the front table looking up at her mother with quite an adoring look on her face. Randy expressed the joy to have Rachel in her life. She encouraged the women in the audience to never give up hope about having a child. "Trust me, you can make it happen. I was in my forties and married for a long time when Rachel was born. It is the greatest thing ever. She is our greatest production ever."

Randy continued on her radio path learning more from her disappointments than her successes. She got to KMET (94.7/fm) in 1986, shortly before the staff was fired en masse to make way for Smooth Jazz, KTWV, 'the WAVE.' While at KMET, Randy became the commercial spokeswoman for the reading program "Hooked on Phonics." Her voice has traveled all over the world. "They tell me that I have taught more people to read than almost any teacher."

"All of a sudden every big name personality from KMET was looking for work. I was a newcomer to the station and not such a big name but I was still out of work."

Randy moved to the start-up at TranStar, which was the forerunner to Westwood One Satellite formats. She later had the opportunity to join KMPC/fm (101.9/fm), which became known as "the Edge." The album oriented format featured Mark Goodman, JJ Jackson, Martha Quinn, Jim Ladd, and Rachel Donahue. The format didn't last long, then a switch was made to "K-Lite," a Soft AC station. Everyone was fired except for Randy. She was kept to do overnights. "I wouldn't quit because in this town, I knew legends who couldn't find jobs," Randy said thoughtfully.

By now, the 'WAVE' - previously a jockless format - had introduced announcers. Randy was miserable working

the overnight shift at 'K-Lite.' "My husband made a call to Alan Chlowitz [gm] and Chris Brodie [pd] at the WAVE and pleaded begged to let me do weekends, which I did for a short time, but then was quickly offered the morning show. I did that for the next three years."

Riding that morning WAVE was exactly where Randy was supposed to be when the next call came. More of this special good luck. In the second part of Randy Thomas' Field of Dreams, a phone call hurls her world into the fourth dimension. (You can reach Randy at: [randy@randythomasvo.com](mailto:randy@randythomasvo.com) )

Randy Thomas' Field of Dreams - Part Two

"If you dream it and never give up - anything is possible."

(August 19, 2008) Randy Thomas addressed the Voiceover 2008 Convention in the ballroom at the Hyatt Century City Hotel on a recent Saturday afternoon. In part one of Randy Thomas' Field of Dreams, she took us on her journey from dreaming of being a dj until a fortuitous phone call that changed her life. Part 2:

In 1993, Danette Herman, one of the producers of the Academy Awards telecast, was listening to Randy on her way to work. An idea was born to have the first woman announcer of the Academy Awards on television. Randy was invited to a top secret audition. "Producer Gil Cates wondered if I would panic talking live before 1 billion people. But it was just like radio. You're only talking to one person. When the red light goes on, I'm at the top of my game. I competed with other great voiceover women, including two other djs from the WAVE. "

Dream it. "How did it take 65 years to finally use a woman?" Randy asked her audience rhetorically. "It wasn't until the '90s when women finally began to permeate radio. After the Academy Awards broadcast, I'm fired two months later and KTWV put two women in morning drive [Sheryl Bernstein and Keri Tombazian]. "

Randy's husband - who worked in the record business - suggested that Randy consider offering voice imaging services for stations around the country. After all, she had great credentials from her radio experience, she was the voice of Hooked on Phonics, plus she had the grandmomma of all experience - the first woman voice on the Academy Awards telecast.

"And I hung out my shingle full time, " said Randy.

She asked her audience. "What's your day job? What's your dream? Hopefully my story will change your perspective, that from some of the worst things that can happen to you are perfect, and they happen for a reason so that you will be ready for what comes next. There's another plan on another level. I always wanted to do something really big and important, but I never

thought I'd be the first. And you can do anything you want. You need to be inspired. Nothing can prevent us from going for any job. Today women can do anything."

"What is your dream?" Randy asked again. "Fill it in with the details of what's really important to you. About having the bigger dream. Making the transition from radio to voiceover means I am not going to live a life where I lose everything if Clear Channel doesn't want me anymore. Wake up to do what you love - from that amazing things happen. Make enough to do what you love in order to be with your family."

Randy praised voiceover star Joe Cipriano for changing the world of voiceover. Pre-JC, voiceover artists spent the day driving from one studio to another and then one audition to another. "Joe is the technical guy that changed the way studios use talent," said Randy. "He built a state-of-the-art home studio with an ISDN line. Now Joe and Don LaFontaine didn't have to leave the house. It changed everywhere. Joe can do sessions from home so he doesn't miss dinner." (Photo: Joe Cipriano in the audience cheering Randy)

In 2003, Randy and her family decided to leave Los Angeles for Ft. Myers, Florida. "I kept my 818 cell phone and was amazed that not only could I work out of Florida, but really anywhere."

Randy implored her audience to do things for other people. She still reads the trade Web site Voice 123. She saw an ad from parents who tragically lost their 10-year-old. They were looking to hire a VO talent to do a spot to raise money for a gymnasium to be built in their son's name. All they had for the VO talent was \$100. Randy donated the time to them. "Whatever opportunities surface just do the job. The really good stuff happens when you give."

Randy introduced her two best friends, Arielle Ford and Martha Quinn. Their talks were very impressive. Arielle talked about "feelingization" - remembering the happiest day of your life and embracing that feeling so you can visualize your dream coming true, and you know how it's going to feel. It's that energy the universe loves to take and run with. She asked the audience to participate in a 5-minute visualization exercise that was very powerful. (Photo: Former KOST middayer Mike Sakellarides (l) was seen on the convention floor visiting with George Whittam of El

Dorado Recording Services. Mike was also in the front row during Randy's talk)

Martha was there at the beginning of MTV. She married Jordan Tarlow, a musician. They have two children. She built a home studio in her Malibu home to do VO work so she could be home with her growing family. Martha also thanked Cipriano for allowing the studio set-up to work.

Time ran out too quickly for the audience. Randy said, "I feel you're all on your game. Take this energy and what you've learned. Your dream is possible, make it bigger than you would give yourself permission to do! Do I still audition? Of course. I audition all the time. It is your job - your main job. The bookings are the benefit. Surround yourself with people who can show you the way. Find someone who inspires you."

Randy concluded with a simple philosophy: "If you dream it and never give up - anything is possible."

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