

I Always Wanted to be “Somebody” ...

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I am a dreamer. I have always dreamed about great ideas and far away places. I have always placed myself in those dreams because I have always wanted to be “somebody”. I didn’t know what that somebody would be, or what it would look like – it changed from day to day, but still I dreamed of being ‘Somebody.’

I wanted to see my name in lights, to see it written bigger than anyone else’s on the billboard – I wanted to be a star! But – there were a few life hurdles in the way.

I was raised on a small dairy farm in the Okanogan valley. It was a poor rural area with very limited potential for those who chose to stay in the valley. We did not have a television or a movie house. In fact, I was 11 years old before I saw my very first movie! Naturally, one of my first dream challenges was that my life exposure was very limited. I saw the same people, heard the same stories and had the same experiences over and over and over. There was no new influence. In a more positive light – one could view it as being very stable.

But still the burn, the desire was there inside me. I wanted to be different from all of the rest; I wanted to be “Somebody” – who ever that may be.

When I got old enough I started to learn new skills. I began to ride horses and eventually compete in local horse shows. Thanks to my grandfather who was a Master Horseman – I learned to ride and perform at a very advanced level. I learned that I loved competition and I loved being in the show ring – especially for a jump-off or best in show. Occasionally I would win and my picture would be in the local newspaper. And for just a moment – I thought I was somebody! But it didn’t last. The next week or month, someone else would have their picture right there in my spot!

When I was 10, I was finally old enough to join 4-H. In a small rural area, 4-H is a very big thing. Everyone who is anyone is in some kind of 4-H club. So I figured out that if I was going to be “Somebody” I had to be in 4-H. I loved it. I learned, I competed, I coached, and I traveled. Part of the 4-H program is Public speaking. Like many people in their initial stages I was very nervous – but – I liked being in front of the group and practiced very long and very hard for each speech I had to give.

I would take my carefully written 4-H style speech – Every word written down so that I could memorize it- out into the pasture. I would stand up in the manger of hay and practice speaking to the cows or the horses or anything that would listen. They were a very tough audience. Cows have very poor eye contact. They get sort of glazed over looking. They make weird noises – they are a very poor audience. Horses are even worse – they turn around; lift their tail and ... well you know. They showed definite lack of appreciation for both my talent and my topic. They were very tough evaluators! What a tough crowd. If you can speak to cows and horses, you can speak to anyone. Today I practice on Teddy Bears they are not nearly as rude – but I still remember my first critics. I entered the speech contests and usually did quite well – mostly because the human audiences were much kinder than the animals were. I would do well until the Provincial Finals. My best friend and I were in direct competition. She lived in a different district and we would match up at the Provincial level. With 4-H, as you progress you win trips to different events where you compete at the next level. When I got to the Provincials I thought that just maybe – now I would be “somebody”. Each and every year I would practice, I would memorize, I would rehearse, I would compete. And every year at the Provincial championships I

would do my very best. And each year I would finish second. My best friend – would go off to Japan, she would go off to Florida, she would be sent to Europe, and me ... I was back on the farm talking to a horse's butt! Dreaming and scheming – I still wanted to be “Somebody”.

In those years although I had a dream, my dream was not even a probability, never mind a possibility. My dreams were vague, they had no substance or structure, and they had no focus and no outline. They were built on mist and fantasy. My dreams were always external to myself. I did not own them, they just came and went as the wind blew – but I still wanted to be “Somebody”.

Through the years I continued to be involved in different events and organizations and from time to time my picture would be in the paper and I would have a very brief fling with fame. And slowly my dreams faded, became tattered like yesterday's wallpaper and lodged way in the back of my mind.

Many years of anonymity passed until one day I had one of those “Awakening” moments. Suddenly my dream was about to become real once more. My sister lent me a tape of a Female Speaker who was giving a very encouraging and uplifting message. Jennifer said – Here – you need this! And I did.

This was my introduction to Florence Littauer one of the top female professional speakers in the world. She had just been inducted into the National Speakers Hall of Fame and also received many other prestigious honors. In my mind, she was “somebody”.

For the very first time – my dream had a focus. For the very first time I had someone to watch and listen to – I had never heard a professional female speaker before. And she is very, very good. For the first time I had someone to emulate to copy to desire to be like. She became my model.

From back in the recesses of my mind I reconstructed my dream. As I worked on setting my goal it became for the first time a probability. I wanted to be “somebody” like Florence.

In 1990 she was in Alberta giving a weekend seminar so I attended. I was thrilled to actually hear her speak in person, and then I got to meet her and shake her hand. I did wash, but reluctantly! She set my dream on fire!

My dream was becoming more real. It was not a distinct probability – but it needed more work.

In 1999 I arranged for her to come to Lethbridge to give a weekend seminar. I invited several of my friends to be on the conference team – you know how much work that is ... and we pulled it off. We had a fabulous weekend with Florence and her husband Fred. The best part was getting to know them a little better. We shared dinners and brunches with them in fun and fellowship. That weekend together reinforced for me that she really was “Somebody” but not in the way that I had originally thought.

I discovered that in addition to being an internationally renowned speaker and author she was very involved in helping other people. Her passion was to help people overcome life's adversity and to become the best that they could be. One of the ways she did that was in teaching classes in how to speak and communicate effectively.

The next summer – 2000 – I was in California attending her professional speaking seminar. Four very intense days of preparing speeches, delivering speeches and being critiqued. The

message was outline, outline, and outline some more. I came home with some solid new skills and a desire for more. I started to practice what she had taught me. And amazingly enough – I did improve! I started to speak to groups and to conduct workshops. And they would invite me back to speak to them again. I discovered, that after spending my youth speaking to the south end of a northbound horse, that human audiences were much, much nicer.

My dream was moving from probable to possible – but I still wasn't quite on track. Florence became my mentor and I would phone or write to her with various questions, and she was always gracious in answering. Her best advice to me was "If you help enough other people to achieve their goals you will achieve your goal. You have to give, to get."

She was right. The picture in the paper was only good for the moment. Next week there was a different picture in your spot. A shiny trophy while nice to have is just a moment of glittering glory. But to contribute to a changed life ... that is a reward that will last a lifetime. That is how you become "Somebody".

Toastmasters

My new journey to being "Somebody" started when my good friend Barb Giesbrecht invited me to a Toastmasters meeting. Do you remember who first invited you? Or, attending your first meeting? Barb intrigued me. I had worked with her for years and knew that she did not do mornings. But here she was, all excited about going to a breakfast meeting at 7:00 in the morning! And she was so excited about what was going on there that she wanted me to come and share it with her! Seven in the morning? Excited? This was definitely very strange – so I had to go! I remember she said to me, "Freddi, I like you and I would love to see you be the best you can be! I think our club can help you do just that!" I had heard of Toastmasters before – my father had several friends who were members, but they were all men! I had never met a female Toastmaster – but that was about to change. I met several, then many, and they all had something I liked. These Toastmasters all cared about other people and were very sincerely interested in helping other people to grow to their fullest potential. These Toastmasters were "Somebody". And just like in my dream – I wanted to be "somebody" too.

Upper Class

A year ago last October it was my privilege to be invited to my friend and mentor's home in Palm Springs. Florence invites small groups of budding speakers into her home for a 4-day very intense advanced speakers training program. Imagine this: 6 accomplished speakers waiting to be polished by 6 talented trainers! This was a dream come true for all of us! On the first evening we had introductions. I was very intimidated by my classmates. They all seemed to be so – accomplished. Hi, I'm Debbie from Lexington Kentucky. I was Miss Kentucky and I am a singer. I have 3 CD's out. My 4th is being released in the spring. "Hi Debbie". Hi I'm Tammy from Washington DC. I have one book published and a second one just going to print. "Hi Tammy". Hi, I'm Kim from Roanoke Virginia. My first book has just been accepted for publication and I regularly speak at women's conferences of 1000 or more. "Hi, Kim." It was starting to feel like a speakers 12 step program. Now it was my turn. Have you ever felt that way? Terrified to introduce yourself because you are so inferior to everyone else? At that time I had nothing in print, I didn't have a CD – I was just me. So I just emptied my brain and opened my mouth. "Hi, I'm Freddi from Canada. I am a Toastmaster!" Wow a Toastmaster! Right on! I always wanted to be one. They were thrilled! These talented accomplished women were impressed that I was a Toastmaster. Who would have known? They all had Web sites – but I was a Toastmaster!

This was a very tough and demanding 4 days. From the moment you woke up to the moment you went to sleep you were on display. Every thing was evaluated. How you walked, how you talked. How you ate your food, how you prepared a speech. Each meal was like Table Topics on current events. The goal was to be polished and professional. At lunch you were given the topic to prepare for the evening presentations. That evening you were given the topic to prepare for the next day and on and on it went. During this time, I discovered that my friend and mentor Florence had a secret life. Her passion was helping others. And speech training was just one way she had of accomplishing that goal. Now I had substance to my dream!

I still dream of being the World Champion Speaker – but my bigger dream is to in some small way, through coaching or mentoring or encouraging contributing to someone else being the World Speaking Champion.

I want to be somebody that can build you up. I want to be somebody that can encourage others, help them to achieve their full potential. My dream is to be somebody that can make a difference in another person's life.

My dream is most definitely my possibility.

What about your dreams? Do you know what they are? Or, do you need to dust them off and bring them out once more? Your dreams can be your possibilities too.

I always wanted to be "Somebody" ... I just needed to be more specific.