



Moving On – A Tribute to Bev Kentfield

by Fran Watson

I'd like to thank Bev Kentfield for the fact that I am able to stand here before you tonite to make this speech. Over 25 years ago Bev had an idea to improve the lives of women. She called a number of women she knew, stay-at-home moms like herself, and through the power of one, the Now Action Group of Stittsville was formed. (NAGS for short)

Bev's idea was that we could come together and learn and each week we had a different speaker. We had someone come in and talk to us about a variety of things to make us feel good about ourselves, including makeup, hairstyling and clothing. Then for two weeks in a row we had a speaker come in to talk about public speaking.

Now back in those days I was extremely shy. I would hide in the corner if anyone came near me at a party or an event. I was the typical wallflower but I had to stand in front of these women and talk. What I spoke about was my grandmother. I was very close to my grandmother and this was very hard for me to do. I cried, but it was okay because I was among friends.

From that beginning I moved on. I moved out of Stittsville and later on I joined another new group. It was called the Women's Initiative Network. It was started by a woman I worked with (the power of one) and I was invited to a meeting. After a few years I ended up as President of that organization and each month I had to speak, to welcome everyone and talk about the things that would be going on during the evening. The sweat poured down my back. (Luckily I was always wearing a suit jacket, so no one could see it, but because of my brief introduction to public speaking so many years ago, I was able to carry on. Although I am no longer a member, this group is still going strong and I was invited back to the 20th anniversary dinner last year.

One evening when we had a large group of people for a fund raising event, the group leader told me that they would like the president to introduce their group – to the 600 people in the audience. (Gulp) I had 5 minutes notice. I have no idea what I said that night but I do know that I did go out and face the crowd and introduce our players.

My first TV interview, however, did not go so well. I froze. All I could do was stare straight at the person who was interviewing me and answer the questions as she gave them. I looked neither left nor right. People told me the next day, "I saw you on television". I wanted to crawl into a corner. I wanted to say, "Please don't tell me that." I wanted to do the whole thing over, but I couldn't.

However, I moved on and while working for Youth Employment Services, I began to do workshops, presenting safety information to young people and later to those who were

unemployed. Still later I began presenting information on job search techniques, helping people learn and develop new skills. Although the sweat did still roll down my back a little, it wasn't as bad as it was in the beginning.

Over the years I did more and more workshops, and when I was presenting a new workshop I was still very nervous, not knowing how the workshop would go over or how people would react. But a workshop is only 5 or 10 people and I felt I needed to develop further. I needed to learn how to speak in front of a group of people. People I had never met before, and feel comfortable. And so, I joined Toastmasters, where I could learn the skills that I would need. Where I would learn how to craft a speech and how to give a speech.

I've moved on and given my first speech, volunteered to be Table Topics Master and give the word of the week, and I've participated in Table Topics. I've noticed that my body still reacts. My face gets flushed and I get nervous, but sweat doesn't roll down my back in the same way.

Maybe I'll never get to the point where I'm not nervous at all, but if I can get to the point where I appear comfortable in front of a large group and where I can share the information I have with someone else and make a difference, I will have succeeded in my endeavours. Thanks Bev.

Fran is now a member of two Toastmasters Clubs and was recently appointed as Area Governor for Area 10, Division B, District 61.