

WIL PROFILE: TERRI LA FLEUR

By BRUCE LA FLEUR

(Co-publisher's note: This was not Terri's idea. She only reluctantly agreed to be the last Women In Leadership candidate. I know she feels strongly the journalist creates stories, not becomes them. Further, she argued that to do this would be too narcissistic. Perhaps it is but the narcissism is mine. Yet, as I traveled around, people continuously asked when we would profile Terri. I insisted because I want people to better know what drives this dynamic diva.)

She's Brenda Star. She's super mom. She's the Energizer Bunny. She's Terri La Fleur, a complex bundle of forward momentum that careens through everyday life like an SUV on black ice. Her relentlessly upbeat nature springs from faith in God and belief in people, life lessons taught to her by her mom.

This woman in leadership traces her entrepreneurial instincts back to selling Girl Scout cookies. She is a master scorekeeper. She keeps track of hundreds of interpersonal relationships with the precision of a Swiss watch, knowing instinctively who forgot their soccer bag, which lottery is launching the next great game, or how many NASPL directors it takes to make a quorum. She organizes and synthesizes large quantities of information into bite sized nuggets. That is her gift.

Despite the outer shell of joviality, La Fleur is a serious person. She studies a parental consent form with the same veracity as an interview transcript of an industry leader. She rarely lets up. When not stuffing envelopes, she's folding laundry. When not greeting guests at a conference, she's greeting parishioners on Sunday.

GROWING UP

La Fleur was the seventh child born to Richard and Helen Markle. As she jokes, her arrival was a complete surprise. When her Mom found out she was pregnant at age 44, her father

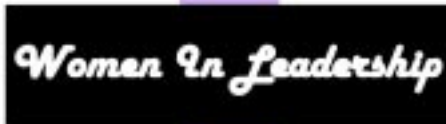
didn't believe it. Then at the hospital after she was born, the nurse told her 20-year-old brother Larry that he was the proud new father of a baby girl.

"I know I was terribly spoiled," said La Fleur. "My brother, Tom, who was 7 when I was born, was my hero. I was always trying to keep up with him which I think gave me a very competitive spirit."

La Fleur grew up in a blue collar family. Her dad was a carpenter. He left school in the 8th grade to work. Her mom was orphaned at age 12 and sent to work in the factories. She never got past 7th grade. "For both of my parents, education was everything," she said. "I was the only girl in my family to graduate from college."

During elementary school, La Fleur discovered her love for writing and the stage. "My brother, Terry, always told me that English was the most important subject in school. I have always been a bookworm," she said.

Tragedy struck the family in 1972 when older brother Tom and his young



wife were found murdered in a New Mexico desert. The perpetrators were never captured. The loss profoundly shocked each family member, rocking an otherwise tranquil childhood and marking her transition into adolescence.

La Fleur's journalism career started as an editor for her high school newspaper. At Dickinson College, she worked on the college newspaper and radio station.

"But my life changed dramatically during my freshman year," she said. "I came home at the end of the semester to find out my mom was dying of cancer. The cancer was so advanced that she died within four months. Our family was so lucky because we all had each other. Our Mom had been the spiritual backbone of the family. It was

devastating at age 19 to lose her."

La Fleur transferred to University of Maryland at College Park. In 1980, she graduated with dual degrees in English and journalism.

ROLE MODEL

There is no question that La Fleur's mother was the most important role model in her life. "Although my mother Helen didn't even graduate from junior high school, she was the smartest and kindest person I have ever known," she said. "She taught me to love God with all my heart and trust Him. She showed me that being a mother is the most important job in the world. She was never too busy to hold a child in her lap. She always made me feel loved."

Speaking of her brother's death, "When Tommy died, I watched my mother's heart break. I don't think anything could be harder than losing one of your children. But she never lost her faith and never grew bitter."

Through her mother's example, La Fleur learned better what to hold onto and what to let go.

CAREER PATH

La Fleur started her career in journalism as an intern for *Public Gaming Magazine* in January 1980. After college, *Public Gaming* publisher Duane Burke hired her as the magazine's first editor. She spent two years at *Public Gaming* writing the magazine articles, supervising college interns, learning layout and design and assisting with conferences. "Working with Doris and Duane Burke was my first opportunity to see an entrepreneurial operation," said La Fleur.

In 1982, La Fleur struck out on her own launching her freelance writing career. "I spent a lot of time working out of my house writing human interest stories. My goal was to become a travel writer," she said.

In 1983, La Fleur was hired as a freelance writer for *Gaming Business*

(now known as IGWB) in New York. Over the next 10 years, La Fleur advanced her career. As senior lottery editor, La Fleur traveled extensively to lottery conferences.

"I credit Guy Simonis for educating me about the global industry," said La Fleur. "He gave a speech in the 1980s where he chastised U.S. lottery executives for their 'Fortress America' attitude. It was my wakeup call. I made it my goal to learn everything I could about international lotteries."

In 1990, La Fleur launched her own company, TLF Publications, and published the *Compendium of Lottery Statistics* in cooperation with Gaming Business. "1991 was a pivotal year in my life," said La Fleur. "I made my first speech at the Intertoto Conference. I talked so fast that the translators gave up trying to follow me."

In 1992, La Fleur's husband Bruce joined TLF Publications and baby Claire joined the family. "People ask me all the time, 'How did it work starting a business with your spouse?' It very nearly didn't. I don't recommend

starting a new baby and a new business in the same year," she said. To add to the stress, desktop publishing was as much in its infancy as the La Fleurs' new daughter. No one in their right mind attempted desktop publishing on a PC. "I was designing page layout on one of the original IBM-PC systems with a whopping 20 megabyte hard drive. The printer blazed away at 10 minutes per page. It took days to just print out book galleys."

In March 1993, TLF Publications, published the 1st edition of *La Fleur's World Lottery Almanac*. In June 1993, La Fleur left her job with IGWB. In September 1993, the first edition of *La Fleur's Lottery World* was mailed. "We had absolutely no idea how much hard work lay ahead," she said.

But the final element was launching a La Fleur's symposium in March 1996. "When Bruce proposed we start organizing conferences, I laughed," said La Fleur. "I told him he could do it because I was too busy with the books and magazine."

UP CLOSE & PERSONAL

La Fleur has been married to Bruce La Fleur for 21 years. They have two children: Claire and Byron.


"I used to laugh at these stories about so-called super moms; you know, the executive woman with full time nannies, full time housekeepers and personal shoppers to help them

out," said La Fleur. "The only thing super about that is the salary required to keep everyone hired. The moms I respect are the ones who have to make it on a budget."

In running TLF, La Fleur admits her management style is very controlling. She has a very definite idea what she wants out of a project and is very exacting in getting the right results.

What does she perceive as the differences in management style between men and women? "Women are more focused on the emotional as well as professional with their employees. I think women tend to be more aware of all the details and implications. Frankly, at times, this is crippling."

La Fleur still sees challenges in the workplace for women in terms of the glass ceiling. "There is still less than 15% of lotteries worldwide run by women," said La Fleur.

In order to further the progress, La Fleur believes more women will choose to be entrepreneurs. "Although you won't enjoy the fame of climbing the corporate ladder, I think it will allow younger women to balance the competing demands of home and worklife. I also think there is incredible talent to be harvested from women returning to the workplace launching their own companies. Certainly there is no question when you're in charge who is to blame. And I personally prefer it that way." 

TERESA (TERRI) LA FLEUR

Position: *Publisher, La Fleur's Magazine*

Years in lottery industry: 21

Birthday: September 29

Age: 43

Horoscope sign: *Libra*

Children: *Byron (13); Claire (9)*

College Education: *BS, Journalism, BA, English, University of Maryland*

Favorite cuisine: *Italian*

Favorite music: *James Taylor*

Favorite author: *Alice Hoffman*

Favorite book: *Mist of Avalon*

Childhood hero: *Brenda Starr*

Woman most admired: *My mother*

Political Orientation: *Republican*

Favorite quote: *"A 100 years from now, it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove . . . but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child."*

Greatest personal achievement: *Reading aloud to my kids every night*

Greatest professional achievement: *Launching my own company*



From left: Bruce, Claire, Byron and Terri (Vows renewal: 20th wedding anniversary)