

Brenda Star



Cover to Cover

by Chris Hayes • Photography by Lynn Mozena

While most kids her age were playing foursquare and hopscotch, Brenda Star was honing her marketing skills.

"I had my first business when I was 5, before I could actually reach the counter of the bank, when I was selling Kool-Aid and cotton candy," she said.

From there, she started selling her brother's old toys door to door. She had started taking dance lessons at age 3, and when their small Kentucky town lost its ballet teacher, she decided to step in.

"So I opened a dance school for adults and children at age 15 while I was cheerleader, editor of the yearbook and president of the class."

By 17, she had designed and marketed her own line of pop art jewelry that continued while she was in college. At 21, she moved to Shreveport, Louisiana, a big change for a girl who was used to being "the little Shirley Temple of the town." Star decided to re-establish her dance school.

"I didn't know about advertising, I certainly didn't have any funding; I had *just* gotten married. I wanted to start

a school, and I literally picked up the White Pages of the phonebook and opened it and started calling people.”

Over a period of twenty-five years, Star established twenty-three dance schools, including the country’s first all-African-American dance school. She also developed a commercial real estate company and single-handedly generated over \$60 million in contracts, all while raising two daughters as a single mother.

In 1993, Star moved to Florida, and after recovering from a serious health condition using alternative medicine, released a small book “to help people realize that they needed to take responsibility for their health.”

“I didn’t really know or care if it would sell, I simply wanted to help people,” she said. “Before I knew it, the media started calling me as if I were a medical expert, and I realized very quickly that a book is the golden key to media.”

By that time, StarGroup International, Inc. had already been established as a PR and marketing firm. Star decided to add a book publishing division to her company, and they’ve been an integral part of their business strategy ever since.

“It became very successful; we’ve done over 100 titles nationally and it’s an incredible marketing, media and fundraising tool.”

StarGroup faced a major setback in 2004 when Hurricane Jeanne demolished their Lake Worth office, destroying files, equipment and thousands of books. However, it also

gave Brenda a chance to incorporate books even more into their business.

“It’s been difficult but interesting, because every move has helped me realize in a much clearer way what I really want to do, which is custom books,” she said. “Where before, we couldn’t do more than two or three books a year, now we can do two or three dozen.”

Whether it’s for a business, not-for-profit or even an individual, the members of StarGroup devote themselves entirely to create a product of which they can be truly proud.

“We’re involved with the concept development, the research, the writing, the editing, the proofreading, the design,” she said. “We do it all.”

StarGroup recognizes the value of a book and the credibility that goes along with it.

“StarGroup has redefined what a book is and what a book can do. A book is more than just a commodity... A book can generate media, it can generate sales; it can help with branding yourself, your product, or your service.”

StarGroup’s years of experience lends them well to understanding what kind of book will make the greatest impact.

“I think our gift is to analyze a situation: the need, the client, the project, the target market, the goals; and then create a product, whether it’s a small gift-type book or a large four-color coffee table book, and create that product to fulfill the need.”

Now in her fifteenth year of book development, Star still approaches each book as a new and exciting opportunity to create much more than good PR, but rather a legacy for her client.

“We love what we do. It’s like having babies, because you get so involved.” **PBG**

For more information on StarGroup International, Inc., call (561) 547-0667 or visit www.stargroupinternational.com.

