

MEMORIES

A woman with confidence

Deborah Norville
balances her
high-profile
career and
family life
with both
ease and
humor.

By Renee Sparks

Deborah Norville is a household name to television viewers who tune in daily to *Inside Edition*. She's the two-time Emmy-winning anchor of the long-running broadcast that offers hard-hitting investigations, exclusive interviews, human interest stories, and fascinating features on which it has built its success.

Deborah is a multi-faceted woman with a variety of creative talents. She is also author of the book *Back on Track: How to Straighten out Your Life When it Throws You a Curve* (Simon & Schuster), which offers the voice of experience and guidance to people seeking help in dealing with life's difficulties.

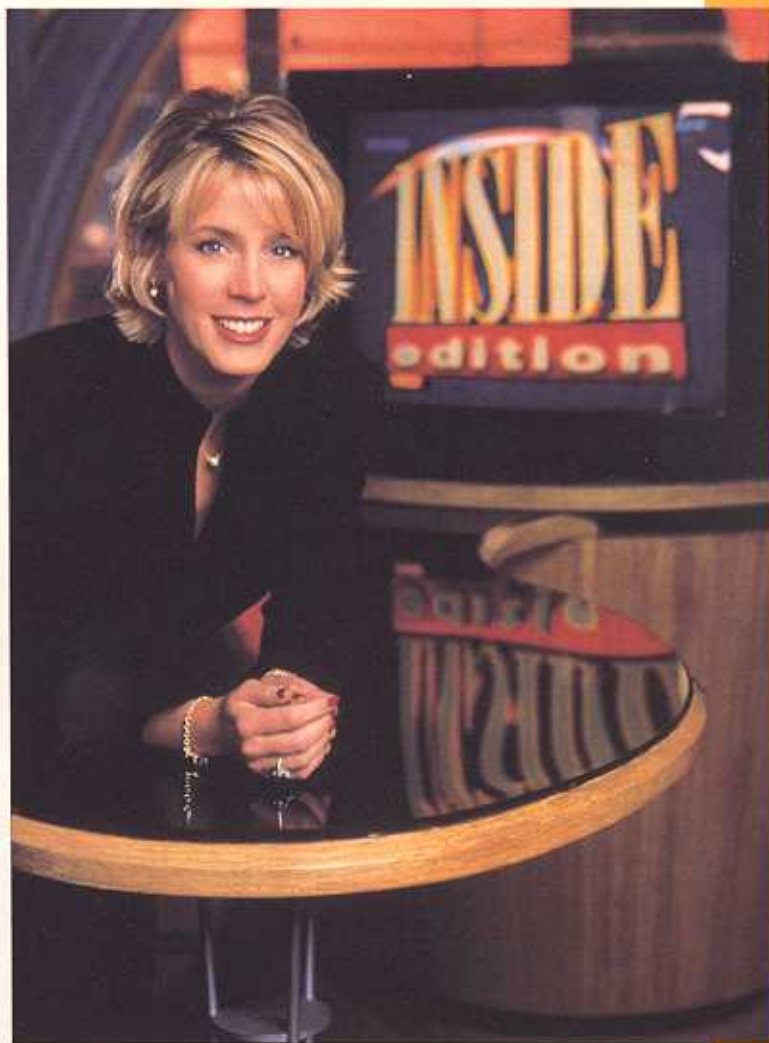
She turned her writing skills in a different direction when she published a children's book, *I Don't Want to Sleep Tonight* (Golden Books), inspired by her own kids' reluctance to stay in bed. "Writing is, for me, a blissful experience. In particular, I didn't start out to write a children's book. I just wrote a funny little poem to help my son wean himself from TV and go to sleep. When I saw that it worked, I thought other Moms could use some help." This spring she published her second children's book, *I Can Fly!* (Golden Books).

The Beginning

Looking back, Deborah can trace her career to her senior year of high school when she decided on a whim to enter the Whitfield County Junior Miss Pageant. Her surprise at winning soon turned into shock when she also won the state competition. Her talent? Sewing.

Deborah recalls the pageant sponsors asking her, "Don't you sing or tap dance when you sew?"

"Nope," she told them. "I pretty much just sit there and sew!"



Both crafting and creating are a big part of her life. She still loves to sew and tackles painting and creative projects in her home with enthusiasm



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Deborah Norville

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As the daughter of hard-working parents who owned their own business, Deborah was taught young to aim for achievement. She entered the University of Georgia with the goal of becoming a broadcast journalist and won an internship at WAGA-TV in Atlanta. "For reasons I will never understand, the station manager gave me a gofer's job for the summer and by day three, it turned into a reporter's gig that continued through my senior year," she recalls. After graduation she joined the station full-time as a weekend anchor.

Career Challenges

She moved on to become a general assignment reporter for an NBC station in Chicago and then to New York as anchor of NBC's *News at Sunrise*, which precedes *The Today Show*. She subsequently was named co-anchor of *Today*, and she bore the brunt of constant media attention

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during a tumultuous period in the series' history. Following the birth of her son, Deborah opted not to return to the show and even considered changing careers. "I experienced a very public upheaval in my career with that position, but I learned a lot, and I pulled myself back together."

Finding a Balance

Becoming a mother made Deborah crave an environment that both permitted her time for her husband and family as well as extensive journalistic opportunities. She was happy to accept a position with ABC Radio Network when they offered her a talk show she could host from her home.

After hosting the radio broadcast for a year, Norville joined CBS News as a correspondent for two primetime newsmagazines, *Street Stories* and *America Tonight*. While

she was praised for her insightful, multi-faceted stories, Norville realized the assignments conflicted with her important personal life. "I went through some real soul searching," Norville remembers. "I questioned how I could leave my own family to go off reporting from the world's far corners."

The Perfect Fit

In 1995 she found the right balance when she was placed in the anchor chair of *Inside Edition*.

The show provides Norville with an intensive workday while still allowing her to be home in time for dinner with her family. She sees her role in the series as the viewer's representative.

"I want viewers to use me as their guide to show them how very different, yet very significant aspects of our society work," she explains. "I'm also able to inject the 'Gimme a break!' and 'Who are you kidding!' side that introduces a light touch and reflects their likely reactions to stories."

Time to Relax

Although she takes on numerous assignments as a reporter, interviewer, and often journalistic participant, she also loves her role as wife and mother and enjoys many relaxing activities at home in New York with her husband, two sons, and daughter.

Both crafting and creating are a big part of her life. She still loves to sew and tackles painting and creative projects with enthusiasm.



Deborah shares her newest children's book, *I Can Fly!*, with two of her children. The book encourages children to explore many paths to find their own special gift.

"That is what I want to give women who watch me on television and who come to my workshops – confidence."

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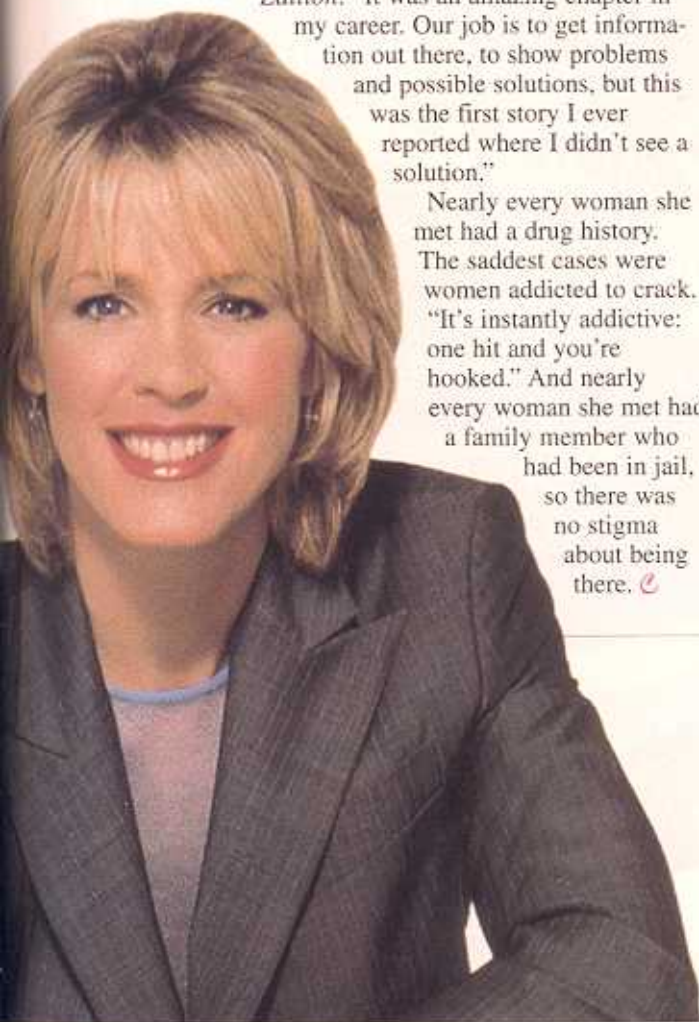
On Assignment

Deborah is actively involved in all aspects of the broadcast of *Inside Edition*, including reporting, interviewing, and providing first-person features. In February 2000, she received national attention for her five-day stay in Davidson County Jail, North Carolina, which bills itself as "the toughest jail in America." There she struggled with – and reported on – the challenges of life behind bars with the women in her cellblock.

"The current phenomenal success of reality-based programming, such as *Survivor*, has shown us something that we at *Inside Edition* have known all along: that viewers identify with people who are facing challenges, making decisions, taking steps in new directions."

Exactly one year later, Deborah re-entered the Davidson County Jail, and her experience was again reported on *Inside Edition*. "It was an amazing chapter in my career. Our job is to get information out there, to show problems and possible solutions, but this was the first story I ever reported where I didn't see a solution."

Nearly every woman she met had a drug history. The saddest cases were women addicted to crack. "It's instantly addictive: one hit and you're hooked." And nearly every woman she met had a family member who had been in jail, so there was no stigma about being there. ☺



"I realized that most of us inhabit a world as foreign to these people as going to Asia is for me. This subculture of America is very real, very large, and kind of hopeless."

Deborah captured some of her experiences in Cellblock A on scrapbook pages that are as poignant as her memories.