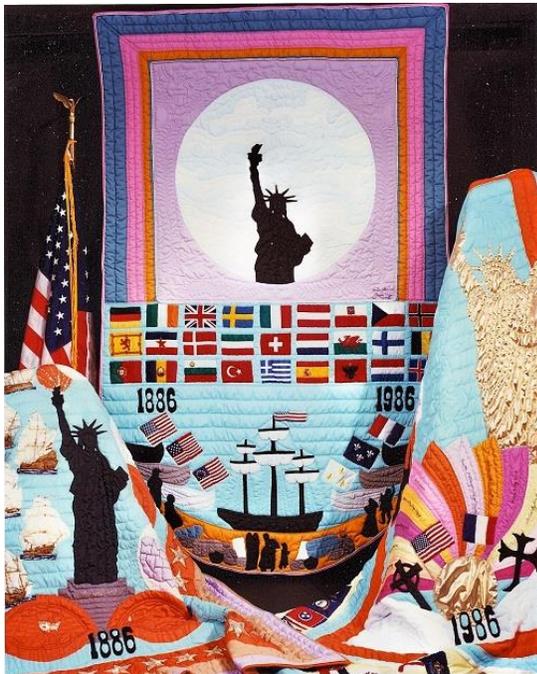


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Follow Your Dream – Encourage Others to Do So

By Carla D. Bass, Colonel, USAF (Ret) | [Author of the Award-winning book, "Write to Influence!"](#)

"Follow your dream!" ... Mom persistently urged her daughters. These words reverberated like a compelling drum beat. She elaborated, "Shoot for the stars and seize them!" Another exhortation delivered often and with equal fervency, "There is no such word as 'can't'" Glass ceilings, nay-sayers ... be damned. If taken, this advice opens doors to amazing, life-changing adventures.



Mom lived her dreams – all of them. Charlotte Christiansen Bass: author, couturier dress designer, radio talk show host, gardener, newspaper columnist, artist, quilter, community leader, teacher, patriot, military wife for 30 of her 52 married years, wall paper hanger, plumber, painter, carpenter, fisherwoman ... and influential in so many ways! I characterize her in three words: inspired, bold, and indefatigable.

Her story is encapsulated in this quilt trilogy, each rich in symbolism, designed and created to commemorate the centennial celebration of the Statue of Liberty and the thousands of immigrants who followed their dreams (including her own father, who traveled from Norway in 1911) to a new future in America.

These three pieces are part of her collection that consists of more than 300 works of art, manifested in a kaleidoscope of fabrics and colors and conveying eye-catching themes such as Ancient Egypt in Stitches, History of the Circus in America, Angels and Space, and Kachinas.

Her quilts reflect another dream, as well. Mom began sewing doll clothes when she was six years old; sewed and sold a wedding gown when she was 18; and became a couturier dress designer while simultaneously filling the roles of military wife and stay-at-home mother for her daughters in grade school.

One day, this passion for sewing morphed into quilting, but not the traditional sort. Nothing about Charlotte was traditional – especially her art. Mom's quilting career is reflected in extensive press coverage that spanned three decades; 15 one-woman shows; two books she wrote about quilting and her designs, published to rave reviews; and several series of classes she taught at the Field Museum in Chicago and through Purdue and Indiana Universities.

Yes, I followed my dream, as well. Mine was a career in the Air Force, specifically Air Force intelligence, a path I chose while in 7th grade. “What?” you exclaim. Dad worked in the field of target intelligence during the Vietnam War. Mom admonished – seemingly daily – “Don’t ask your father anything about his work!” Well, I decided to join the Air Force, myself, and learn what this “intelligence” entailed. I served 30 years – loved each day – and retired as a colonel ... one of the few women in my generation to do so.

I am now following a second major dream. While in the Air Force, I developed writing techniques and strategies, composed a 14-page handbook, created a workshop, and for 15 years taught thousands of Air Force troops to write powerfully. This enabled them to better compete for promotion, selective schools, etc., by leveraging the strength of their own written words. I still receive testimonials, “Colonel Bass, if it hadn’t been for your class, I wouldn’t have ...”

Based on this, I authored an award-winning book ... “Write to Influence!” ... that celebrated its first birthday on January 3, 2018. It has already helped hundreds of people follow their own dreams ... from high school seniors composing essays on college applications to folks in the workforce wanting to advance professionally. For me, this is another dream come true – helping others help themselves.

Mom’s legacy ... the amazing quilt collection, certainly. Far greater, however, is the lesson that with a bit of courage and self-confidence ... like those immigrants who helped shape our nation ... we, too, can seize and shape our own future. Sometimes, it only requires encouragement to take those initial steps.

Thanks, Mom! This article is for you.