

## Yvonne Chase on Doing It Your Way

From the time I was a little girl I wanted to be Miss America. I also wanted to be a famous daytime TV soap opera star on none other than *All My Children*. I dreamt of singing, modeling and having my face plastered on the cover of *Essence* magazine. Of course, I would also be a top anchor on the 6 o'clock news. And I didn't want to do these things as hobbies when I had time; I planned to make my living doing *all* of these things.

I think I came out of my mother's womb talking with a microphone in my hand. I love to talk and can converse with anyone about anything at anytime. Turn the camera on and I come alive instantaneously. God gave me the personality and gifts that lend themselves easily to all the things that I wanted to do and be when I was younger. However, I grew up in a very strict Christian Caribbean home and wasn't exactly encouraged to use all the creative energy I had been blessed with.

My parents had a hard time wrapping their minds around me making a living as an entertainer. They had something a little bit more practical in mind. "How about being a school teacher or a nurse, doctor or lawyer? What about a career in computers or technology?" they asked. In their eyes, I wasn't "normal"—I was different. One day my father told me that I was the most different child he had and he wanted to know where I came from. My other siblings were considered normal because they all desired normal careers. I, on the other hand, had a strong creative gene that needed to be satisfied.

There were many rules in the Chase family, and attending a four-year-college was one of the biggest. And there were other rules attached to this big rule, including that you had to attend full-time and never take breaks between semesters.

By the time I was set to go to college, the constant questioning of my career goals had made me rethink my plans. I convinced myself that perhaps I should seek a “more practical” career, and I decided that I would become a gynecologist. So naturally, when I went to register at Brooklyn College I planned to enroll in medical classes and science courses, but all of those were filled. The only classes available were TV/radio production classes. I couldn’t go home unregistered, so I went with the TV/radio production program, which soon became my major.

God had thrown me right back into the world of creativity. I loved it! My first internship was at a TV studio anchoring the news and being the weather girl. I was in heaven! Every summer I interned at radio and TV stations learning all that I could about my future career. I wasn’t sure of exactly where I fit in but I sure was having a lot of fun finding out. I was a reporter for Brooklyn Cable News and I was out there reporting and covering the Democratic National Convention. I was thrilled to be able to say, “This is Yvonne Chase reporting live from 34th Street and 6th Avenue. Back to you Alex in the studio.”

Graduation soon came. Armed with a college degree and lots of experience from the many internships I had at CNN, KISS-FM and other media outlets, I was ready to hit the ground running and find my first job in TV. It was tough finding a job in the media industry, I won’t lie about that, but I networked and talked to everyone I met to see who knew who. At one point I became discouraged and thought about entering an easier field; my parents were still bugging me to do something else with my life. But something told me to not give up so easily.

One day I went back to KISS FM to talk with An Tripp, an on-air personality who had become a mentor to me. She didn’t have the answers about how or where I could find a job, but she gave me a lead about a new talk show that would soon be airing. She