

# Perfect Poise

A Goodyear comedian is pursuing her own talk show after entering an Oprah Winfrey Network competition. But life for Terey Summers wasn't always so glamorous.

**F**OR YEARS, TEREY SUMMERS has been making people laugh. In fact, the first thing you'll notice about Summers is her laugh—a guffaw, really—hearty, sincere, infectious. Another thing you'll notice about this Goodyear resident is the sparkle in her eyes, the same sparkle that Oprah Winfrey and Mark Burnett saw when they watched her audition tape for Winfrey's new network talk-show competition, *Your Own Show*, a search for Winfrey's newest talk show star.

As a working actress and comedian starring in numerous stage and film productions, Summers has been a Phoenix Theatre regular for almost a quarter of a century, including a stint as Rose Mofford in *Guv: The Musical*. Humor is a mainstay of her motivational and inspirational programs, including Phoenix Theatre's Partners That Heal, a group that entertains patients at Phoenix Children's and St. Joseph's hospitals.

A good friend of Alice Cooper, Summers included the iconic rocker in the Winfrey audition tape. Laughing her way through an Alice Cooper makeup lesson, she comes off as authentic and humble, and says it's good to hear herself laugh because three years ago, her life was very different.

In October 2007, Summers was dealt a stunning blow, when her husband, Jim, died in an automobile accident. She found herself alone and unhealthy, weighing more than 350 pounds.

"One day after Jim died, I saw my life as this ceramic pot that had smashed on the floor, pieces scattered all around, and that's when I knew I had a choice. I could either die a slow death or take a deep breath and pick up all these pieces and start telling myself the truth," she says.

The first thing she had to do was get healthy, and weight loss was the first step. Facing her food addiction head-on, she began to research her love affair with carbs. It was around that time that she was asked to do voiceover work for a website introducing a new meal replacement shake. During the taping, she told the doctor who had formulated the product that she didn't think she was there for the voiceover work but rather for a solution to her weight problem. He recognized her problem was due to metabolic syndrome and put her on a regimen



that included a Mediterranean-style diet, exercise and the shakes. To date, Summers has lost 170 pounds and is still going.

Next came her career. Summers says, "I spent some time asking myself, 'What do you want to do that you haven't done?'" She decided to put together a demo to send out to local television stations for a talk show that revolved around humor. At the time she was finishing up the demo, a friend sent her an e-mail telling her that Winfrey was looking for the next television talk-show star.

"I thought, 'Wow, I have a talk-show demo in my back pocket,'" she says. She spent the next couple of days whittling it down to the required three minutes and

sent it out. Eight days later, she heard from the producers at Oprah Winfrey Network (OWN).

Summers, 46, beat out more than 15,000 other hopefuls in the challenge when the producers chose her as one of the final 10 to compete on air. Summers then made it to the final three before being eliminated.

Now she is pursuing her own show, and may still be on her way to international fame and fortune. Drawing on her life story, she wants to inspire others and motivate them through humor.

"A friend told me, 'You're living your dream,' and I thought, 'Well, yeah, I am.'"

— Sally Benford