

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Debbye Turner Bell

PERSON

Turner Bell, Debrah Lynne,  
1965-

**Alternative Names:** Debbye Turner Bell;

**Life Dates:** September 19, 1965-

**Place of Birth:** Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

**Residence:** Grand Rapids, MI

**Work:** Grand Rapids, MI

**Occupations:** Broadcast Journalist; Veterinarian

## Biographical Note

Broadcast journalist and veterinarian Debrah Lynn Turner Bell was born on September 19, 1965 in Honolulu, Hawaii to Gussie Turner and Frederick C. Turner, Jr. Raised in Jonesboro, Arkansas, Turner Bell graduated from Jonesboro High School in 1983. She went on to attend Arkansas State University, where she

received her B.S. degree in agriculture in 1986. In 1991, Turner Bell obtained her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree from the University of Missouri-Columbia.

In 1989, Turner Bell won the Miss Missouri pageant title. Later the same year, she became the first delegate from the State of Missouri to win the Miss America crown. After winning the title of Miss America, Turner Bell became the national spokesperson for Ralston Purina's Caring for Pets Program. In 1995, she was hired as a host of the Public Broadcasting Service animal show, "The Gentle Doctor", and as co-host of KSDK's entertainment magazine show, "Show Me St. Louis", where she was nominated for multiple Emmy Awards. From 2001 to 2003, Turner Bell worked as an on-air contributor to CBS networks' "The Early Show", and from 2003 until 2012, she served as a staff correspondent for CBS News. In 2013, she was hired as an anchor for Arise News.

Turner Bell has hosted "48 Hours on WE" and appeared on Animal Planet's "Cats 101" and "Dogs 101" series. She has also hosted the Miss Missouri, Miss Florida, and Miss Georgia pageants, and was a Miss America Pageant judge in 1997 and 2011. Turner Bell has appeared as a guest on numerous television programs including "The Late Show with David Letterman", "Oprah", and the "Today" show. In addition, she has served as a motivational speaker for over twenty years. Turner Bell's honors include the University of Missouri - Columbia, Black Alumni Organization's Distinguished Alumni Award; the Outstanding Young Alumnus Award from the College of Agriculture, Arkansas State University; Outstanding Alumnus Award from the University of Missouri-Columbia; and the First Place award for Outstanding Reporting from the New York Association of Black Journalists. In 1998, she was named a Distinguished Alumna of Arkansas State University, where she established the Debbye Turner Scholarship and the Gussie Turner Memorial Scholarship. Turner Bell

received an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, and was inducted into the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame in October of 1994.

She has served on local, state and national boards, including the Children's Miracle Network, the National Council on Youth Leadership, the Missouri Division of Youth Services, the Mathews-Dickey Boys Club, and the National Advisory Child Health and Human Development Council as part of the National Institutes of Health. She served as director of the Consortium of Doctors from 1994 to 1995.

Turner Bell lives in the New York City area with her husband and daughter.

Debye Turner Bell was interviewed by "The HistoryMakers" on August 12, 2014.

## **Related Entries**

**University of Missouri** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Doctor of Veterinary Medicine**

**Arkansas State University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**B.S. in Agriculture**

**Jonesboro High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Douglas MacArthur Junior High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**East Elementary School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Safeway Food Store** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1984 to 1986]

**Cashier**

**Dillard's Department Store** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1986 to ?]

**Sales Associate**

**Miss America 1990** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1989 to 1990]

**Self Employed** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1991 to ?]

**Motivational Speaker**

**Ralston Purina's Caring for Pets Program** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1991 to 1993]

**National Spokesperson**

**"ShowMe St. Louis"** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1995 to 2001]

**On-air Co-Host**

**PBS "The Gentle Doctor"** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1995 to 1998]

**On-air Host**

**CBS Networks' "The Early Show"** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 2001 to 2003]

**On-air Contributor**

**CBS News** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 2003 to 2012]

**On-air Staff Correspondent**

**48 Hours on WE** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 2008 to 2010]

**On-air Host**

**DOGS 101/CATS 101 Television Shows** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 2010 to 2011]

**On-air Guest Expert**

**Arise News** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 2013 to ?]

**Anchor**

**American Veterinary Medical Association** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Missouri Veterinary Medical Association** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**American Federation of Television and Recording  
Artists** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ)**  
[MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Student Chapter of the American Association of  
Feline Practitioners, University of Missouri-  
Columbia** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Graduate Professional Council, University of  
Missouri-Columbia** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Freshman Class Representative**

**Missouri Division of Youth Services Board of  
Directors** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Member**

**National Council on Youth Leadership Board of**

**Directors** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Member**

**Mathews-Dickey Boys Club Board of Directors**

[MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Member**

**Gamma Phi Beta, Arkansas State University**

[MEMBEROF]

[from 1985 to ?]

**Treasurer**

**Honors Association, Arkansas State University**

[MEMBEROF]

[from 1985 to ?]

**President**

**Student Chapter of American Veterinary Medical Association, University of Missouri-Columbia**

[MEMBEROF]

[from 1988 to ?]

**Vice President**

**National Centers for Missing and Exploited Children National Advisory Board** [MEMBEROF]

[from 1990 to 1992]

**Children's Miracle Network Board of Trustees**

[MEMBEROF]

[from 1991 to 1997]

**Member**

**Missouri 4-H Board of Directors** [MEMBEROF]

[from 1991 to 1994]

**Member**

**Miss America Organization Board of Directors**

[MEMBEROF]

[from 1991 to 1994]

**Member**

**Metro St. Louis YWCA Board of Directors** [MEMBEROF]

[from 1992 to 1998]

**Member**

**Consortium of Doctors** [MEMBEROF]

[from 1994 to 1995]

**Director**

**National Advisory Child Health and Human  
Development Council** [MEMBEROF]

[from 2002 to 2006]