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# Arts & Culture



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## KATE CAMPBELL: FEATURE INTERVIEW

*Boundless with Kate Campbell & Dini Petty*

Kate Campbell's exciting film recognizing the contributions of the courageous women pilots during World War II. By Rose Marie Bresolin

spectacularly  
**BOUNDLESS**

With Kate Campbell & Dini Petty

Kate Campbell's exciting film recognizing  
the contributions of the courageous women  
pilots during World War II

By Rose Marie Bresolin



## INTERVIEW

After listening to Dini Petty speak with passion about the aviation film *Boundless* and Kate Campbell who directed it, I asked if she could arrange an interview. I knew there was a story in it for our **Spencer** readers and was excited when the answer came back as yes.

Rose Marie Bresolin: So, Kate, thank you for agreeing to the interview. And Dini, welcome back. Dini, as a woman who was born near the end of WWII with planes thundering overhead as they bombed London, your reaction to such a fearsome experience could have taken you either way; either you'd be drawn to flying or cringe at the thought of airplanes. Thankfully for us, it went in favor of your choosing to fly.

Dini, I'd like to put a few questions about *Boundless* to Kate first and then have you take us into your experience of the filming.

Kate, *Boundless* is described as a historical fiction, a narrative that was inspired by your grandmother, Betty Grepley. And while a pilot, she herself was not in the war. She's deceased now, but her impact lives on in you, and now through this film, she stands to impact much more widely. That must bring you a great degree of satisfaction. Tell us a little bit about this special someone you refer to as your best friend.

Kate: It does bring me satisfaction. It's been a fairly long journey and obviously my grandmother was an incredible woman who still inspires me. This project is a love letter to her and what she represented to me. I don't know where I would be without her. I grew up hearing her stories about

flying and watching her interact with male pilots as they compared notes and it was in one of her stories that I first heard about Dini. My grandmother got her license in the 50's and Dini got hers in the late 60's and they both flew out of Buttonville airport in Ontario, Canada.

Such a vivid image, thank you. Given that much of the information you were seeking was buried for so long, what level of cooperation did you receive in the developing stages of the film?

Kate: A lot of help actually. I began with the First Canadian Chapter of the Ninety-Nines in Toronto, Canada where my grandmother was a member. The more research I did, the more women pilots I found and then I discovered the

Women Airforce Service Pilots known as WASP, and I was astounded that no one knew their story. Then I moved to Los Angeles and eventually began interviewing women pilots in California, Seattle and Texas. I discovered that the Women Airforce Service Pilots held an annual homecoming every year on Memorial Day weekend in Sweetwater, Texas where they originally trained. I started going every year, filming the surviving women and some of the planes they flew. Originally, I wanted someone else to write the story and I approached the only three writers I knew. They were all men and fortunately they all said no.

So, with lots of encouragement from mentors and friends, I started writing the story myself. I had moved to Los Angeles to continue pursuing my acting career. I had some success but along the way I learned just how messy and painful the struggle is and how strong you have to be to follow

your dreams. Soon after I landed in LA I began singing again and launched a career with that, so by the time I started writing *Boundless*, I had the tenacity and the courage to do it. This is where historical fiction comes in, because when you spend so many years researching the facts and hearing the stories, it provides a rich tapestry to write from. Then I further developed it over the years with an incredible collective of artists to flesh the story out.

While you were in the various stages, did you ever think about abandoning the project?

Kate: Many times, but I knew that I wouldn't, which was terribly frustrating. I learned what it meant to be a woman not only in that time but also today, as women still face many of the same issues. We've come a long way, but we still have a long way to go.

Yes, and I think it's worth underscoring, that you allowed yourself to think about quitting and then you carried on. And here you are! How did you drum up the funds, and I realize now that

was another new experience for you, just as the filming was. So, take us into that.

Kate: Yes it was. I decided I wanted to shoot a short film version of *Boundless* because I was tired of waiting for someone to do something about it. So, I organized a fundraising concert in my hometown of Haliburton, Ontario, Canada. I also received some grant money from the Haliburton County Development Corporation. There have been other community and private donations as well.

We tried an online campaign with Indiegogo, but it didn't do well, mainly because I didn't have the team in place before we launched. But thankfully, a fantastic team did come together. We are still fundraising and seeking sponsorships.

One thing the movie brings out is what happened when the war ended, and the men came home. Talk to us about this and some of the other findings in the process of researching and interviewing female pilots across North America, for the film.





**Kate:** The women who had been ferrying the military aircraft were disbanded before the war actually ended. As we started to win the war the men returned from overseas and there was no place for the women to continue. Society as a whole, was not supportive of the women continuing on the path of piloting military aircraft or any career in aviation.

**Might women in general have felt justified in becoming part of that resistance in a belief that they were protecting their husband's jobs?**

Well, that too, but there's a deeper issue, one that still exists today. Society was not prepared for these powerful women or their contribution. There's programmed patriarchy in all of us. It's been ingrained. So how does a society shift consciousness? Men are not to blame. Now especially, women hold a lot of responsibility for this change. It takes a lot of work, the facing of oneself, and it takes guts to change anything.

I've been surrounded by a lot of powerful women and, for better or worse, it gave me what I needed to step into myself. We have a responsibility to ourselves and to younger generations. You never know who you're affecting.

**There's transparency and honesty in what you're doing. I imagine you're also looking to dig deep to see if there is a general will to make the change? It'll take a lot of energy from like-minded people to cause a societal shift from a position long fixed. It's always promising to hear of people willing to play a part in it. Hopefully the positive light shed by the film will help to allay some fears; maybe help grease a rusty wheel... Tell us where and when the filming began?**

**Kate:** We shot in September, 2019.

**I thought it had been earlier.**

**Kate:** We actually pushed the date back twice. We shot mainly in Guelph, Canada because it was rural and reminiscent of Avenger Field in Sweetwater Texas, where the women trained, and we could still land the planes that we were working with. We ended the shoot at the Niagara Military Museum in Niagara Falls, Canada. On one of the days, we had 60 extras to travel to Guelph, in a no-budget situation plus 35 to 40 crew members too, so feeding all those people was challenging. Kirtida Kitchen, a great Indian restaurant in Guelph, had their food truck come out to feed us all our hot lunch that day. It was wonderful.

## FILM & TELEVISION

**My mind just keeps saying wow. Now tell us about the little girl who could.**

**Kate:** Yes, my production manager and I were working online in a program called Zoom where our cast and background actors could just video call into our space to confirm and show us their wardrobe. So, while I was under the gun working with my production manager in my apartment, (that looked like a bomb went off!), we forgot that the computer screen was even on, and this young woman popped up. "Oh!" I responded after being taken aback. And the girl went on to say that she was calling from Winnipeg and wanted to tell us that she was coming out for the shoot. I was so excited. I mean, she flew herself out for one day and was so proud to be a part of it. It was stuff like that; people came out of the woodwork to offer help. We were given all of the camera equipment from SIM, a really incredible camera rental house in Toronto, Canada. A lot of production support came from Buck Productions and two post-production companies have come on board. Clark Stanley and Rolling Pictures.

**And yet again, wow! Lots of good souls out there. And Oshkosh?**

**Kate:** Oh, yes. That was for the teaser that I shot in in 2018; some of it was filmed in Los Angeles, some of it in Ontario, Canada and some was in Oshkosh, Wisconsin which is the largest aviation convention in the world. It goes on for miles in every direction. You could attend the entire convention and not see all of it. It's like Disneyland for aviation geeks.

**I see how that could be exciting.**

Dini, at this point intrigued with the direction the interview is taking, interjects.

**Dini Petty:** There was something I've been meaning to ask you Kate. When did you first hear the story of WASP? Who first led you there?

**Kate:** It was in the early stages; the more research I did the more women pilots I found. I was floored by their stories. I then began to realize how long it was going to take and how much work it would require. I was overwhelmed.

**It does sound overwhelming.**



**Dini:** One of the things that impresses me about the film and unless you're a pilot, you might not appreciate it, is that these women were only required to have 35 hours of flying time to become a WASP! 35 hours is so little time! Today you need 40 hours for a private license and a hundred for your commercial license for one type of aircraft. These women were flying several different kinds of planes. That's extraordinary!

**While the excitement must have been high, I'm also imagining the fear. Thanks Dini. Okay, Kate! What do you want the film to do?**

**Kate:** I want the film to be a calling card for the miniseries which we already have in writing development, and the film will also tour the film festival circuit. I also hope that it will speak to younger generations of women and girls; to share

that this is something that is possible. Only 6% of all pilots globally are women. Not a large percentage.

**Dini:** What film festivals will you be entering it in?

**Kate:** I'd love to try for Cannes, and then hoping it will go to the Palm Springs Short Festival and TIFF, among others.

**Dini:** What about Sundance?

**Kate:** I love Sundance, and it's definitely something to aim for. We'll see.

**What markers will you be looking for to tell you if the film has achieved your goals? How will you know if your digging went deep enough?**



*We have a responsibility to ourselves and to younger generations to pass down the stories of the female pilots who played a part in WWII. When girls see themselves represented, it gives them permission to do the same. You never know who you're affecting.*

**Kate:** I think if it moves people. And if it can attract more support and financing, as we move into miniseries territory. And when it gets its due recognition for what it is.

**What about education, how do you see that playing out as one of your supports?**

**Kate:** I'd love to share it with schools. I have shared it with my hometown school. They'll be the first people to be impacted, having seen the process, not just the story. It's important, not just for girls to see women represented and acknowledged, but for the boys as well.

**I can see the impact having value for both genders, and in both the elementary and secondary panels; to see girls written into a history they had a part in making. Another positive way to help expand awareness.**

**Kate:** Absolutely. And it's also working with organizations like the Ninety-Nines, the organization of women pilots founded by Emilia Earhart in 1929 that my grandmother was a member of and of which I'm a student member. I also had a booth at an event called Girls Take Flight, in April at the Oshawa Airport in Ontario, Canada where they welcome young women and girls to learn more about the world of aviation and they get to go up in a plane. So, there are more and more outlets for getting the information out there.

**Dini:** Did you know that Emilia Earhart wanted to start an association for women pilots? She sent out hundreds of invitations and 99 women showed up and the Ninety-nines were born.



**This is amazing. So, Dini, I believe this was your first role in a movie?**

**Dini:** No, I've been in several, but most often cast in the role of an interviewer. I would like to do more.

**How did it make you feel to be a part of a mechanism focused on delivering an incredibly powerful message?**

*"The hope is that younger women see themselves in these stories because that's what my grandmother was for me too."*



*Dini Petty taking flight in Boundless*

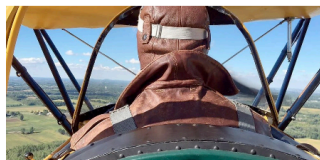
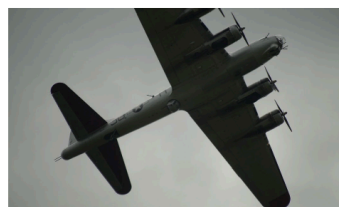




Seems I've said it too many times, and not enough, and I see the same message on Dini's face as well. We're simply amazed. Thank you, Kate, and our thanks to the late Betty.

Photo Credit: Samantha Falco

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**Dini:** Terrific. As Kate and I were becoming friends she told me about her grandmother who also flew out of Buttonville Airport but when I realized Betty Grepley and I knew each other, I was amazed! So when Kate asked me to do the part, my first thought was "the circle is complete." I'm thrilled to be part of Kate's dream honoring women in aviation. But I hadn't acted in a long time so I was apprehensive and I think Kate was a little nervous, maybe?

women's stories now being told. It's empowering. There is something transformational about narrative work. It changes lives. I saw "A League of Their Own" when I was growing up, and it launched my whole high school athletic career. I was a national athlete back then and I learned a great deal about myself because of that film. The hope is that younger women see themselves in these stories because that's what my grandmother was for me too. I could see myself in her because she had done it.

**Kate:** I wasn't nervous about you doing it, Dini. I just didn't want you to feel you had to pitch or sell anything because it was such a private moment. I wanted you to be comfortable enough to be vulnerable, and you were just so lovely. After the first take, I turned around and 35, 40 crew members were teary eyed. It was just beautiful.

*"Emilia Earhart wanted to start an association for women pilots. She sent out hundreds of invitations and 99 women showed up and the Ninety-nines were born."*

**Kate, my experience is that the moment you've done something that has a serious impact, it automatically becomes the seed for something else, something more. What do you see next?**

There's so much pressure, even more so on women and girls today, to look and be and act in a certain way especially with social media. The pressure on the psyche from the technological age that we are in can be crippling. Information overload and everyone feeling that they have to have a picture-perfect life lacks human connection. I think that narrative stories are so powerful because if they're done well, they speak directly to our humanity and bypass the superficiality. They have the power to change lives.

**Kate:** I think the seed of it is to do it on a larger scale and to not stop. To keep telling more stories, more women's stories. It's a great time to look at our current reality. And there are so many fantastic

