



AFTERTHOUGHTS

MARGARET
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OK with pageant change

I've had several people ask me what my thoughts are about the elimination of the swimsuit competition in the Miss America pageant.

I do have some ideas, especially since I have had the opportunity to be involved with a variety of pageants over the years, literally covering hundreds during my time at the newspaper. My own daughters have participated in the events, with most of them ending in a fun experience. Now my only granddaughter, Lauren, holds the title of Miss Preteen Tennessee National Teenager, and will compete in Baltimore in November.

The most recent info from the Miss America system is that contestants will not compete in a swimsuit category, sometimes called fitness and lifestyle. There is no mention of discontinuing the evening gown competition, as earlier indicated. If you don't have an evening gown category, it's just an interview session.

The swimsuit competition was presented during the first contest in 1921 on the Atlantic City boardwalk. Of course the suits they started with are nothing like the bikinis and high heels they wear today.

It does bother me that the girls have to present themselves in that way but, as they say, they know what they signed up for. I actually don't know why they model bikinis. What's wrong with a one-piece swimsuit? You can still see she is physically fit and takes care of her body. It's a fact, a girl would never win wearing a one-piece suit. And who wears high heels with a swimsuit? No one unless they're on a stage!

Another thing I don't understand is the huge platform shoes the contestants wear to make them look taller and their legs look longer. I can understand it with a floor-length gown, but with a cocktail dress or swimsuit, it just makes them look awkward and throws off their posture. Just imagine trying to walk on a 2-3-inch block with a spiked heel supporting it. Very high heels are one thing, but these platforms do not appeal to me.

According to Miss America chairwoman and former Miss America Gretchen Carlson, contestants are not going to be judged on their outward appearance. I have a hard time with that statement. Whether you admit it or not, we all sometimes judge people on their outward appearance. If you are applying for a job, or if you are letting someone into your home to work, you can bet you are aware of their appearance.

According to officials, the changes are immediate for Miss America, but will take longer to trickle down to the local and state events. In recent days, more discussions have taken place about the changes and the disapproval with how the board is handling other situations. I'm sure there will be more announcements in the future.

To close, I have become acquainted with many pageant contestants, and most are intelligent and educated women with a purpose and ambition in their lives. They sometimes refer to pageants as their "sport," which I can understand.

I feel a woman's level of intelligence, future goals and life aspirations are much more important than how she presents herself in a bikini, so I'm not sad about the change.

Sew much fun

BY MARGARET HOBBS
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Sewing is a fun and creative outlet for people of all ages, including teenagers. Children of any age can learn sewing basics and build on those skills to tackle larger projects.

Several 4-H Honor Club members were able to participate in a Sewing Camp planned by 4-H Extension agent Shay Davis. The three-day clinic exposed students to the various steps of sewing, including material selection, cutting techniques, pattern tips and basic sewing machine instructions.

"This is a pilot program which was started as a project group resulting in a sewing camp," said Davis. "The girls can make a dress, a skirt or palazzo pants, with plans to enter them at the state fair and our local fair."

Davis, who is not as accomplished in the skill as she would like, enlisted assistance from home economics teacher Linda Parris.

Parris says she enjoys sewing and sharing her love with others. Since she has been sewing since she was 9 years of age, she is quite the professional.

Patience is a huge element in

teaching youngsters to sew, and according to Parris she practices patience in the classroom and being the mother to a teenage boy.

"I have learned patience in raising by son, Carl," said Parris. "He can sew, but doesn't always admit to it, but he has been a great help during the camp."

The class was open to boys, with brothers Will and Jake Mayes joining Carl with the various activities. Their mission was to make curtains for their bedrooms, and to sew chair covers for a school classroom. None of the boys had future plans to be in front of the sewing machine, but thought the experience was fun.

"I have sewed up holes in my shirt before," said Jake. "Sewing is a good skill to have, because you never know when you will need it."

Being able to sew provides an outlet to explore your creativity, and a way to save money on clothes and alterations. Sewing can also be a social activity to enjoy with friends and others who enjoy the craft.

"Sewing is a skill and it is dying out," said Parris. "It's not taught in schools like it used to be, and parents are not sharing with their children. I think these students will be proud they had this opportunity to learn a valuable life skill."



Margaret Hobbs photos
Honor Club member KeyLe Rhea receives instructions from sewing instructor Linda Parris. She and other students took part in a three-day sewing camp.



Veteran seamstress Linda Parris offers advice to Emma Young as she completes her skirt.



Sewing is a skill beneficial to both boys and girls, as brothers, from left, Jake and Will Mayes find out from 4-H agent Shay Davis. The boys in the group made curtains and covers for seat cushions.



Precision cutting is the first step in a successful sewing project, with campers, from left, Megan Biles and Marynia Harris completing the task at hand.



Lauren Mansfield gets to know the workings of a sewing machine during the first day of camp. During the three-day camp she expanded on her sewing skills and made several items.