

Judging Miss Iowa Pageant -- Beautiful Job, Great Learning Experience, Tough Procedures and Protocol

K. S. J. Murkowski

A short time ago, I was contacted to become part of the Miss America Pageant system. While judges are normally selected for their expertise and their work for the Miss America Corporation, the committee usually selects a "rookie" to be included with the panel of experienced beauty panel judges, someone never affiliated with the pageant process. In addition, the pageant committee tries to select judges from out of state so as not to be influenced by any friends or family of the contestants.

The pageant was to be held June 12-14 in Davenport, Iowa. I graciously accepted the honor of being chosen as a Miss Iowa 1991 Pageant judge.

I had already planned to be in Davenport at that time as a guest banquet speaker at the Palmer College commencement, class 912. It was an honor to be selected as a commencement banquet speaker and be present on stage to watch the students, whose entire educational process I had followed, finally reaching their goal of becoming DCs.

Now as an added bonus, I was to participate simultaneously as a judge in the 1991 Miss Iowa Pageant.

The Miss America Pageant Corporation is not a beauty pageant. It is a scholarship and talent pageant. It is one of the largest scholarship and talent pageants in the world.

The winner of the Miss America Pageant receives a scholarship of at least \$35,000, and will receive approximately \$250,000 in personal appearance money along with other prizes. There are many additional opportunities for the contestants to win scholarship monies: Scholarship awards are given in the talent preliminaries; the swimsuit preliminaries; non-finalist interview winner; most photogenic; miss congeniality; evening gown, etc.

To be placed in this kind of environment with the responsibility of choosing which contestant would have an opportunity to achieve this unique and personal goal was an extreme honor and pleasure for me.

Upon arriving in Davenport, I was greeted by the judges' chairperson, Miss Kim Richardson. I received the judge's book of photographs, biographical sketches, and fact sheets of each contestant, along with criteria and score sheets.

The judges meet on Wednesday prior to the competition to review the contestants, photographs, and schedule the contestants' interviews for the following day. All the judges stayed together on the same floor in the same hotel and traveled to and from the theater of judging in a limousine.

On Thursday we were ushered to the interview room. The contestants were escorted in, one at a time, and introduced to each judge. For the next 10 minutes the panel of five judges questioned the

contestant. The interview is designed to give the judges an opportunity to learn as much as possible about the contestant and assess her ability to express herself. This interview portion of the competition is considered very important and thus counts for 30 percent of the contestant's overall score.

The initial stage competition began Thursday night and was completed by Friday night. The talent competition counts for 40 percent; swimsuit and physical appearance is 15 percent; and the evening gown and public speaking portion count a total of 15 percent. The judges meet afterward to select the seven finalists that would be announced at Saturday night's competition. The meeting lasted until 12:30 a.m.

After the seven finalist were announced, all previous scores were eliminated, with the exception of the scores for the personal interviews from Thursday. This meant the competition started anew for the seven finalists: talent, public speaking, evening gown, and swimsuit competitions were repeated and judged.

This year's Miss Iowa selection is Lisa Somodi, Miss Muscatine county. Lisa is a concert pianist. She indicated it took her some eight months to study and learn the selection she performed for the talent presentation. I believe with Lisa's talent and interview skills, it is very possible she will place in the top ten in the Miss America Pageant.

While the judges were kept very busy with their work, we were also involved in at least one activity a day, tours, luncheons, etc. When a problem arose with one of the tours on Saturday, I was able to arrange a special tour of Palmer College, Palmer Clinic, and the Palmer Mansion for all of the judges and members of the Miss Iowa board of directors.

During the lunch that followed the chiropractic tour, I was approached by a member of the Miss Iowa board of directors who indicated that they would be honored if someone from Palmer College of Chiropractic could serve on the the board and be affiliated with the Miss Iowa Pageant.

I have talked to Dr. Donald Kern, president of Palmer and Michael Crawford, chancellor of Palmer Chiropractic University. They have agreed to have a representative from the college become a member of the Miss Iowa board of directors sometime this fall.

I also proposed that a full chiropractic scholarship be offered to the Miss Iowa winner, should the contestant ever decide to become a chiropractor. With the judges' positive chiropractic experience on the Palmer tour, plus the pageant being held in Davenport every year, and a future Palmer affiliating with the Miss Iowa board of directors, I cannot think of a better way of serving the public and enhancing the pageant by having Palmer College of Chiropractic offer a scholarship to the winner of the pageant.

There has been a fair amount of chiropractic involvement in the Miss America Pageant at different levels: One year there was a DC from Missouri who was a contestant in the Miss America Pageant; there have been numerous daughters of chiropractors in the pageant; Bridgett Gardner was a finalist from Life College in the Miss Black America Pageant (see "Life Student Contends for Miss Black America Crown" in the July 5, 1991 issue of "DC"). To my knowledge, there has never been a chiropractor asked to judge a major state pageant. I have also been asked to go to Atlantic City for the Miss America Pageant in September and be a member of the Iowa State delegation. Presently, I am trying to help prepare Lisa Somodi, Miss Iowa 1991 with her interview questions and other suggestions to enhance her performance in Atlantic city.

In summary, I think it has been one of the most interesting, exciting, experiences of my life. I've

already been contacted by other states to become a judge for their state pageants. I look forward to attending the Miss America Pageant 1991 in Atlantic City as a member of the Iowa State delegation. I will root for Miss Iowa 1991, Lisa Somodi in her quest for the Miss America crown. Of course, I will still root for my own Miss Michigan. I hope it will be another learning experience and I hope I will have an opportunity to promote chiropractic in a positive manner during Miss America Pageant 1991.

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Editor's note: Dr. Murkowski predicted Miss Iowa, Lisa Somodi would place in the top 10 in Atlantic City. She did indeed: Lisa was the 3rd runner-up to the winner, Miss Hawaii.

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