

a v.i.p. and me

(very interesting person)

By KATHLEEN A. HICKS

“As Miss Mississauga, I hope to do the best I can; I want to fulfill everything that is required of me, and that I can give everything I have got and I really mean that with all my heart.”



DEBBIE GIFFIN Miss Mississauga 1974

ME: You are the seventh Miss Mississauga. How does it feel to win a beauty title over 27 attractive young ladies?

DEBBIE: It feels good! It is something that I never really expected — I never expected to win. As a matter of fact, everybody was saying, “What do you want to go in that for?”, because there are so many other attractive girls. I am kind of short, and my Mom would say everybody else is so tall and glamorous with long, silky hair — the real model type — and here is little ole me chugging along. So I really feel I have accomplished something and I have proved to my parents that I could do it. That is the main thing. It wasn't the fact of just winning over somebody else — that's not the way I feel. I think that I have proved I could do something I thought I couldn't.

ME: How did you happen to enter the Miss Mississauga Pageant?

DEBBIE: Well, two years ago I read all about it in The News, and I thought when I reach 18, I will enter that. Then when it came around last year, I was just too busy and I didn't have time. This year, I was reading the newspaper and I thought, — Well, maybe I'll try it. And I did.

ME: What were the preliminaries like from your point of view?

DEBBIE: They really didn't have preliminaries for the Miss Mississauga Pageant. We got together on the Thursday and Mr. Agostini (Mississauga News Publisher) was talking to us, explaining what we had to do. I remember looking around, thinking one of these girls is going to win, and I was trying to pick out the one I thought would be the next Miss Mississauga. The following night, we had the dinner and rehearsal. I was sitting next to Nance Gluszek (1973 Miss Mississauga), and I was talking with her. She seemed really, really nice, and you know, I was sort of afraid to talk to her; I felt a little inferior to her, because I thought she was someone greater than I am. Then when we had the rehearsal

with Jay Nelson, and they had the orchestra and everything, it felt so neat; it was the nicest feeling. We had a semi-dry run through, and I was chosen as one of the five finalists. I thought, — Wow, my great chance. Then all Saturday, butterflies — I didn't eat all day. In fact, I was more nervous for the Miss Mississauga than I was for the Miss Canada Pageant. I've only done the two, and it was a really great experience.

ME: Just how has your life changed since you took on your new title?

DEBBIE: I am meeting people that I would never have met if I were just the plain, ordinary me. I have a big ambition to get into public relations. That's what I want more than anything. Since I became Miss Mississauga, I have been involved a couple of days a week for pictures and promotions. I had the two weeks at the Miss Canada Pageant, which was fantastic. I am enjoying the involvement very much. I have found that people are looking up to me more; they are more friendly and it makes me feel good to be Miss Mississauga.

ME: You are the first City Miss Mississauga representative. How much do you enjoy participating in local events arranged by your sponsor, The Mississauga News?

DEBBIE: That is my whole main objective, to be involved, and I love the events I have to participate in, because I enjoy meeting so many people. I enjoyed crowning Miss Celano at Celano Night, and it was really exciting; I sat with Don Blenkarn, (Mississauga MP) Doug Kennedy (Peel South MPP) and Mayor Dobkin. I also did a walk-a-thon for The Mississauga News, and I presented the little children with their certificates; it was really a lot of fun.

ME: One of your gifts was a trip to Nassau, which you recently took advantage of. Tell me about this adventure.

DEBBIE: That was a great experience — my girl friend and I did everything. If I had the choice, I would go to live there. I have never in all my life met so many fantastic people; we

met missionaries — people from all walks of life — they are so nice you just can't believe it. It was just a new environment of people and I would love to go and work amongst them. Everything there seems to be at a number one pace; no hustle bustle, no city, just very quiet and relaxing. The service was slow, but they couldn't do enough for us. Everybody is so happy and carefree; there doesn't seem to be any problems. I've travelled nearly all my life, because my father was in the Royal Canadian Army as a helicopter pilot, and we have lived in 25 different places in Canada and the United States. So I love to travel and it was just a beautiful trip.

ME: Had you modelled before receiving your charm course from the Walter Thorton Model Agency?

DEBBIE: Yes I had; I was with Eleanor Fulcher down on Yonge Street in Toronto. My mother was a professional model before she was married. When I was 13, I really had

an inferiority complex, and my parents thought modelling might help me. They went to all the different schools, and they were really impressed with Eleanor Fulcher's. So I was there for three years, and I graduated in 1970. I haven't done much with it. They always told me that I was too short to model, but I would recommend it for every girl; it's very beneficial. I start with Walter Thornton this month.

ME: Most of our Miss Mississaugas have become quite well known modelling and acting after spending their year under the crown. Do you have plans in this direction?

DEBBIE: I hope to get into acting. I took dramatics for two years while I was at Applewood Secondary School, and I really liked it. When I did my talent for the Miss Canada Pageant, Austin Willis (Famed Canadian Actor and one of the Judges) told me I should go into it. He seemed quite impressed with me. I've gone to Cleo Productions and they are going to look into it for me. If I can get into some modelling with Walter Thornton, I wouldn't mind doing it. I could possibly do commercials for television.

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1974
Debbie Giffin

ME: Give me some insight into your participation in the Miss Canada Pageant.

DEBBIE: I thought the preliminary was more exciting than the actual pageant. When we did out talent, everyone just got themselves to psyched up. You know, when you are going on to do acting, you have to feel the part of someone else. You have to shut your eyes and think that person and you walk on there and the spot light is on you and tat-tah! And it's so exciting. We had to wear our bathing suits, and we wore our own evening gowns on the night of the preliminary, not the ones we actually wore in the pageant.

ME: What jitters of nerves and what anticipation is associated with such a contest of beauty, poise and talent?

DEBBIE: I was anticipating a lot. I didn't feel as though I was overly excited, and yet I was sick every day. It was really wierd: your body reacts strangely, yet your mind isn't thinking things like being nervous. I was more nervous during rehearsals than the actual production itself, because we rehearsed the production so much, it was just like another rehearsal and you don't think of it as being the real thing. When I rehearsed my talent on the Friday afternoon, I was really nervous, but when we did the preliminaries that

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'I want very much to be discovered'

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night and I did my talent for an audience, it was just as though I was doing it in my own living room. I got a great from the audience and I felt good about it. And afterwards Nance and Jim Robinson came up to me and they really thought I had it wrapped up and I felt great about my chances. But I got sick with bronchitis

and had to rest. And I know I wasn't myself when I was talking with the judges. I also missed a rehearsal. I was really in rough shape, and I was in bed for two weeks after I came home.

ME: Your talent for the Miss Canada Pageant was an impersonation of Barbra Streisand. Do you enjoy this?

DEBBIE: I love it. It's really funny because I started this when I was about 11 or 12 years old — you know how little kids think and they get to the point where they want to be a star. Well, I bought this album and it had a Barbra Streisand piece on it, and I really liked the way she sang. I used to lipsync, pretend I was her. Then I started doing it to other records. When my parents had company in, they would ask me to do my impersonations, and they would tell me I was really good. I saw the movie Funny Girl and I enjoyed it so much I went to see it seven times, and I really got involved in the song, "Don't Rain on my Parade". At the Miss Canada Pageant, Roland, the choreographer for the Pig and Whistle Show, taught me some different movements and told me various ways I could present myself. It's a strange feeling, but when I impersonate Barbra Streisand, I really feel as though I am her and they are my words. It's really weird. I hope because of this ability to portray someone else and really feeling the part helps me to be a great actress someday — I want very much to be discovered.

ME: Do you find experiencing all these various activities contributes much to your life?

DEBBIE: Yes, very much; it has added wider scope to my life in general. For instance, as I said before, meeting different people that I would never have met if I wasn't Miss Mississauga. Who would ever have dreamed I would meet the Mayor or have my picture in the paper every week. I enjoy meeting people; I know if you pursue meeting people and doing things, you really get a lot out of life. Everybody says use your title, but I think why should I use that as an excuse to do things, why can't I do things myself more or less. But I want to take advantage of this year and do as many things as I possibly can. I want to apply what I know and what I am capable of and show my talents; I know this year will give me the opportunity to do this.

ME: What led to your working at the Constellation Hotel and then the Bristol Place Hotel where you are now a supervisor in the reservations department?

DEBBIE: I used to sell electronic equipment at Sherway Gardens and I worked every day with only Sundays off. I was getting a little discouraged because I had no night life. One day, the manager at Sam the Record Man told me he had a friend at the Constellation Hotel and I should call him about a job. So I did and I went for an interview. I worked at the Constellation for four months and the Bristol Place

opened up and I went for an interview and told them I wanted to get into public relations, realizing a new hotel isn't established, but they put me into reservations. I am quite a job skipper, and I am always looking for more of a challenge, so I hope to go on to better and bigger things.

ME: Your father, Dave, is a Mississauga Rotarian. Do you get certain benefits from his involvement with a service club?

DEBBIE: No, not really. When I was younger, I used to go to the children's parties. My Dad is a branch manager of the Mutual Life of Canada. Dad mentioned something about my talking at his club, but I don't know if I will or not. I was asked to start up an Interact Club at school once; I never got involved though. He talks about his meetings and the speakers they have, and it all sounds very interesting.

ME: As a member of the Applewood Ratepayers Association, you planned and executed a Fashion Show. How did this endeavour come about and was it a satisfying experience for you?

DEBBIE: I became associated with the Ratepayers through my parents involvement. I was editor of the Year Book at school and I came up with the idea for a fashion show and we worked on it for months. It was really successful; we made over \$400 on it. It was Mrs. Corney from the Applewood Ratepayers who phoned the school to ask if there was anyone who knew something about putting on a fashion show and they gave her my name and phone number and she called me. I went to their meetings and was placed in charge of the program and tickets. It turned out really great and it was a fantastic experience for me. I even ended up modelling and was presented with roses. I love participating in things like that; it's very fulfilling.

ME: Just how important is life to a 19-year-old beauty queen?

DEBBIE: To me, it is just wonderful. I feel it is an ego booster — it really is. Before I thought I was like everyone else; now I no longer feel inferior to some people. I am still me, but I am just so happy; I can't explain it — you wouldn't believe it. As Miss Mississauga, I hope to do the best I can; I want to fulfill everything that is required of me, and that I can give everything I have got and I really mean that with all my heart.