

# Beauty Pageant Living

Comics \_\_\_\_\_ 4  
TV programs \_\_\_\_\_ 5-8  
Thursday, Sept. 5, 1985 — Santa Cruz Sentinel



Photos by Dan Coyro

Miss California, Lisa Gail Davenport, has a last word with Charles Grebmeier.

## Turn off the lights, folks,





Miss California, Lisa Gail Davenport, has a last word with Charles Grebmeier.

# Turn off the lights, folks, 'cause the pageant's over

9-5-85

By MARYBETH VARCADOS  
Sentinel Living Editor

**T**HE PARTY'S over. It's almost time to call it a day. The last Miss California chosen in Santa Cruz has new luggage to carry her glamorous wardrobe to Atlantic City, and whether she's crowned Miss America or not on Sept. 15, the



'I'll miss it,' says Sharon Baldwin, who spent up to 30 hours a week, year-round, working at the Miss Cal pageant office.

state pageant will pack its bags and move to San Diego the next morning.

Every summer for 60 years, the beauties have come back to Santa Cruz. But no more. Dwindling support, the high cost of security because of outside protesters and lack of adequate facilities brought a seemingly sudden decision from the pageant's national decision-makers. A tradition has been yanked up by the roots.

The last cocktail party of the 1985 pageant was over around 8 p.m. Tuesday at the creekside deck of Soquel's Courtyard restaurant. Board president Duf Fischer, whose pageant affiliation goes back to the '60s, offered a toast of wry champagne, and a mist settled wistfully over many eyes.

Lisa Davenport of San Mateo, 23, the last Santa Cruz vintage Miss California, sang songs about reaching one's goal and talked about how the Lord was watching over her. She was full of praise, consoling, effusively grateful, and gentle as she gave her thanks to the handful — about 100 at the core — of pageant faithfuls. "I hope I can go out and win Miss America for you in return," she said, in thanks for the luggage, a large photograph of herself and a basketful of monetary donations.

These people have poured money and time into creating women like Davenport, saying over and over how strongly they believe in this "scholarship program," how proud they are to be members of the pageant family.

**I**N AN unobtrusive corner, interior designer Charles Grebmeier, active in the

pageant since 1967 and producer from 1968-84, sipped his drink. "It's sad," he said. "You've had something very strong and watch it go, like a slow death. It's like you've lost somebody. I'm 44 — close to half of my life has been involved in it."

"Now I'm more involved in my business, and my family," he said quietly.

Still bustling to get her Miss California looking perfect for this last Santa Cruz appearance, Sue Stolle was nonetheless winding down, after giving a good part of her past 20 years to the pageant, the last 10 on a year-round basis. Davenport joked to the crowd about the bow on the tush of her ultra-feminine Jessica McClintock dress, and Stolle's quick aside was, "The beautiful clothes — they're just the frosting on the cake, not the nuts and bolts of the pageant."

She first became involved through the Jaycees in Ohio. "I love to see and encourage young women to really reach out and find their very best and go for it."

But now, no more meetings, no more shifts at the pageant office in the Civic Auditorium. How will she fill the void? Well, she's just joined University Baptist Church, said the energetic woman, "I'm joining the church choir, and I'm returning to teaching, as a substitute."

From the sounds of it, the entire Santa Cruz pageant coterie intends to monitor the move to San Diego. A transition team has been selected, and "everybody" is going next summer to watch Miss California be crowned, Southern California style.

Confidence in the new producer, Bob Arynham, is a byword. "Bob will be positive. He has been in the



A light moment is shared by, left to right, Diane Tremblay, Duf Fischer, Cherie Fischer, Elena LaBorde and Lisa Davenport. Joanne Pearce is seated.

pageant 25 years and there is an elegant style to him," said Grebmeier. "He will protect it. He'll take care of the program, what it stands for. The image, the honor."

Joanne Pearce's husband Henry, a gynecologist, was the official pageant doctor and a judge. Like the others, both have given thousands of hours over their past 15 years. They'll definitely be in the audience next year, she said, "just to see how it's doing. I'll miss the pageant, but it (the move) is for the best."

Maureen Benito, who has been in charge of the pageant's opening day festivities for six years, wouldn't miss the first year in San Diego; neither will Nell Young, up from her Palm Springs home. For the past 20 years, Young has used her home here as her pageant base. "It may have been hard work, but it was fun. We need this social clutch once a year. We always looked forward to the ball. It was a good week's get-together." The pageant was Santa Cruz's social core, the women agreed. Now, Young said, she'll put her social energies into Palm

Springs Women's Club, and golf.

Being a pageant supporter is expensive. "You'd be surprised how much money goes out of your pockets to keep this thing going," Young added. "To make money, you have to take it out of your own pocket."

**A**T a table under a little tree, Charlotte Randolph sat throughout the party. And next to her, Sharon Baldwin. Two of the dynamic trio that's been the pageant's heart. The third, Linda McPherson, was helping with the party.

Randolph, Baldwin, McPherson and Stolle will head the transition team south. Up to the last minute, they are running the office, winding things up. They'll help forge a hostess committee — crucial to the volunteer workings — out of San Diego society. But first, they must find a home for Miss California. Stolle's term as housemother is up.

Support, not money, must not be the issue, the Santa Cruz team will inform their San Diego successors.

The host family receives \$100 a month. And very few expenses, even travel, are reimbursed.

Baldwin was a contestant once, in Utah, and her father was a judge. When she and her husband Roy took over an automobile agency here, assuming the previous owner's pageant involvement came naturally. With their son in high school, Baldwin had free hours. She spent 10-30 hours a week, year round, at the Civic Auditorium office. "I will miss it," she said. Now she'll spend more time helping her husband with the business.

Randolph doesn't live in Santa Cruz, really. Her home is in Lodi, with her husband, a vineyardist. But when her involvement in Miss California became so demanding a few years ago, she got a place here.

"Our daughter was Miss San Joaquin County in 1966. I had never been to a pageant before, and she didn't make the top 10, but I thought it was a worthwhile program," she said. In following years, she went from

Please see Page D2

# Pageant farewells—

Continued from Page D1

traveling companion to president of the organization and became a formidable pageant presence. She sees herself as a member of the 300,000-member nationwide pageant family.

"I can't believe it's over with," she mused from her background seat. But, on the other hand, she said, she'll look forward to watching the show from the audience for once. "And I'll move home to Lodi. After the grape harvest, I'll probably travel a little with my husband. We haven't had time for that in recent years."

It's an especially emotional ending for McPherson, once a Miss California contestant. "I've been associated with the pageant as long as I can remember — back to when my dad was on the board, seeing it every year. I have emotional ties with it being in Santa Cruz — I really had expectations and hopes of realizing some dreams I had for the pageant.

It is a very emotional type of organization, and there were in-house problems, but it required that because the emotions ran high. So many people put in emotions and their own money."

There's no counting the hours she put in, McPherson said. And there's no question, "It will leave a personal void."

She had kind words for the guests as they filed away from the party. It's too early to think of other commitments, she said. On Wednesday, Stolle and McPherson would help Miss California pack her bags. Friday morning, the plane leaves for Atlantic City.

The tension, emotion-filled end of the pageant's term in McPherson's hometown has come. The 1985 pageant parties are over.

But there's still one more grand party to come, she added. A big thank you, probably around the holidays, for all who gave.