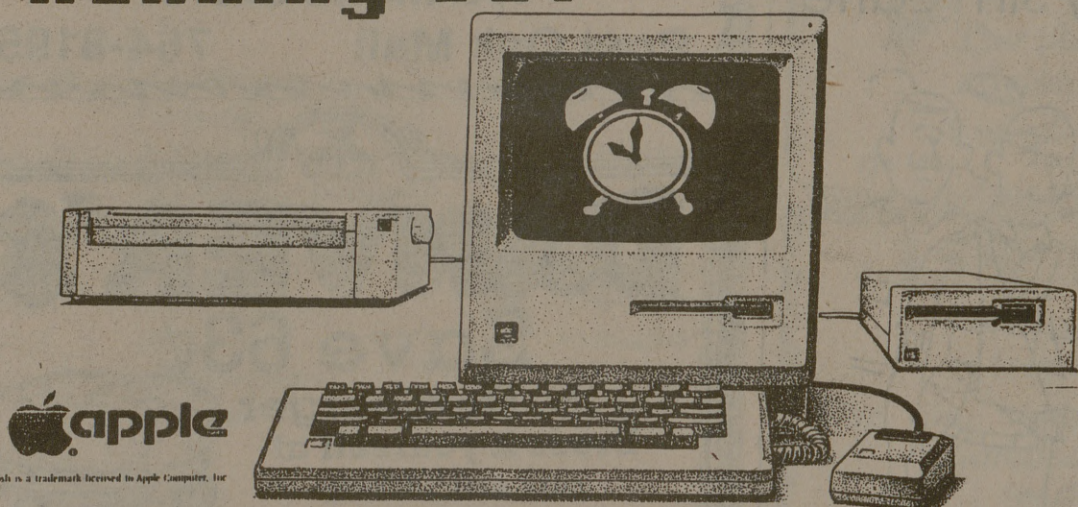


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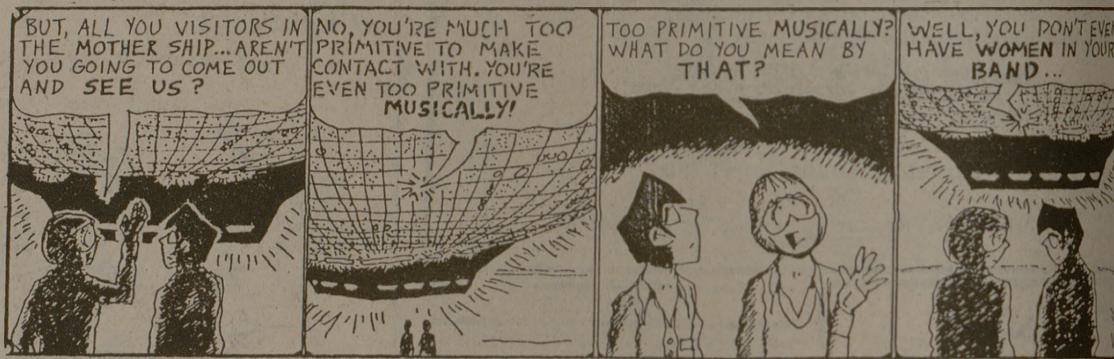
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Beauty pageant mania

For children, adults or cash?

Associated Press

ATHENS — Miss Toddler Queen, Miss Personality Queen, Miss Baby Queen, Miss Fashion Queen, Miss Baby Portfolio Queen, Miss National Pre-Teen.

These are a few of the titles girls of all ages can win in beauty pageants held year round. Children, some only a few months old, "model" expensive party dresses and sportswear for a panel of judges who then must decide who is the "most beautiful" or who has the "best personality."

How do these pageants work and what do they mean to parents and the people who run them? And how much do they mean to the children entered in them?

Beauty pageants are held each weekend across the state. These pageant systems are usually profit-making organizations soliciting contestants to compete for recognition or prizes from a promoter.

Pageant categories include party dress, sportswear, talent, most beautiful, best personality, photogenic and portfolio. The children are rated on a scale of 1 to 10 on their modeling ability, poise, projection, personality, interviews and facial beauty. The baby groups, according to one pageant director, are judged mostly for personality and eye contact.

But, of course, none of this happens for free.

At the local level the entry or

"Brooke doesn't really know what's going on. It's like a birthday party to her. We went to a pageant... where she did nothing but run back and forth across the stage." — Theresa Bambeck.

sponsorship fee can range anywhere from \$50 to \$150 depending on how many categories a participant enters, the amount of awards presented and the prestige of the title. The fee is paid to the pageant promoter by the participant. But entry fees are only the beginning.

The clothes the children model throughout one day's events can cost from \$100 to \$400. In addition, the portfolio or photogenic category requires professional quality photographs that can cost hundreds of dollars. Many pageant contestants also take modeling and dance lessons from pageant coaches.

Aside from wardrobe and coaching costs, there are travel, cosmetic, food and lodging expenses.

There are ways to cut costs, however. Mabank's Clara Ries, mother of 14-year-old Cindy and coach for about 40 other pageant regulars, designs and makes all her daughter's

clothes, as well as the clothes for her students.

"Pageants do cost money," Mrs. Ries said. "But making Cindy's clothes helps. Cindy pays for everything from prize money. That usually covers it."

Theresa Bambeck's two children, Leslie, 7, and Brooke, 2, compete in pageants locally, statewide and nationally. Leslie, who enters a pageant every month or six weeks, has won international titles and more than 300 trophies and 100 crowns. Her children recently signed with an agency in Dallas.

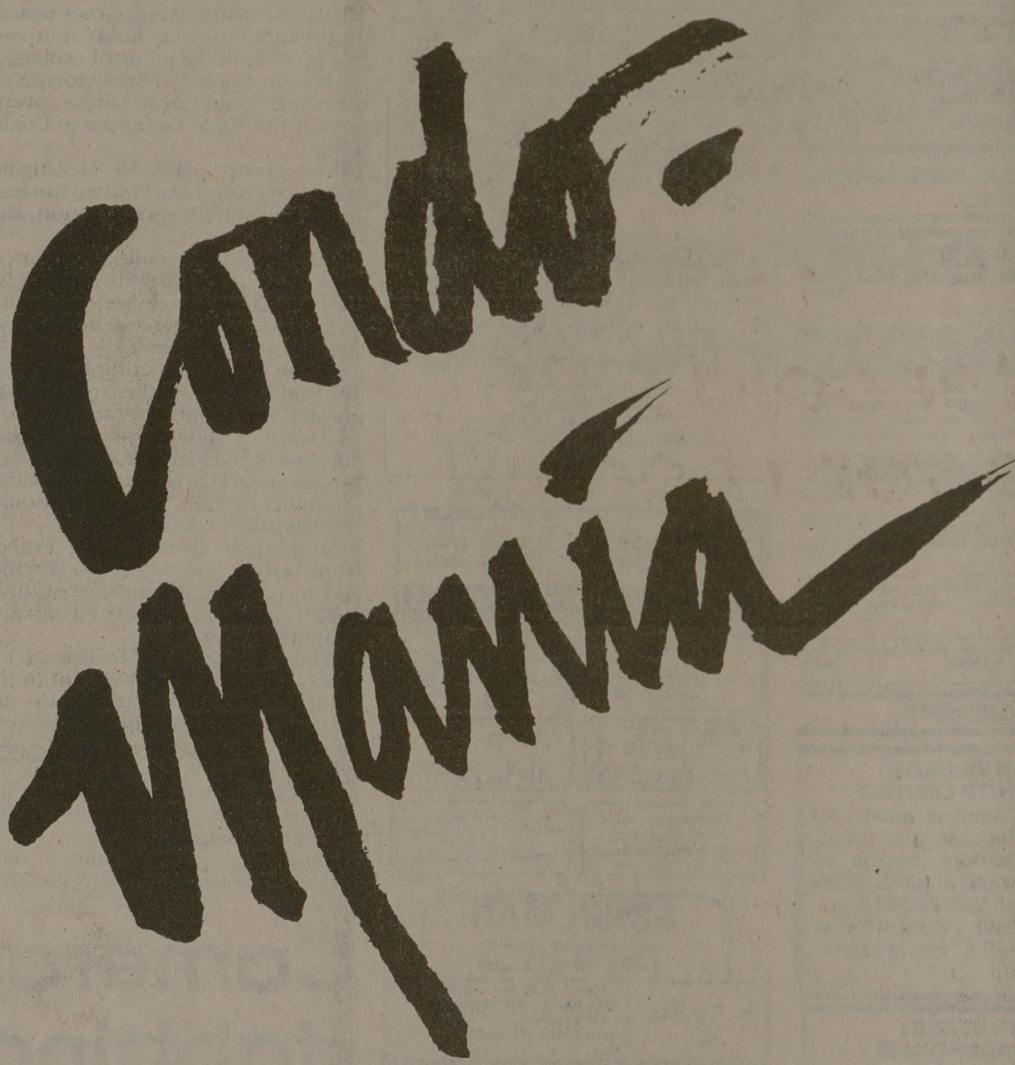
She says her 2-year-old, winner of about 50 trophies, has a lot of fun competing.

"Brooke doesn't really know what's going on," Bambeck said. "It's like a birthday party to her. We went to a pageant a couple of months ago where she did nothing but run back and forth across the stage."

As for the advantages of beauty pageants, both Bambeck and Ries say their children have developed outgoing personalities.

"It helps pull out the personality," Bambeck said.

Ries said, "It teaches children to set their goals and it teaches them to do what you have to do to reach those goals."



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