

Local

Women were once imported to participate

Cotton Pageant sees many changes

By DIANA SULTENFUSS  
Battalion Reporter

In 1932, cotton cost 5 cents a pound and it took about 300 man-hours to produce a bale. And there were no female students at the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas.

In 1981, cotton costs 8 cents a pound and a bale takes about 15 man-hours to produce. And now there are 11,412 women at Texas A&M University.

But through the years, the Agronomy Society at Texas A&M University has held the annual Cotton Pageant, even though the pageant has undergone a major change. In the beginning, it was necessary to import all the women from other colleges and the local community for the pageant. Now, in addition to those sources, female students at the University participate.

The first Cotton Pageant was held in 1932 and was one of the biggest social events of the year. They would just about transport Texas Women's University down here for the pageant," said Raymond D. Staten, associate professor of agronomy.

The women from TWU were selected by a visiting group of Texas A&M students. Texas A&M Mothers' Clubs and A&M Clubs sponsored entry for women in the event. Southwest Conference universities also sent participants.

Now, women are sponsored by Texas A&M organizations and

Texas A&M Mothers' Clubs. Each organization must pay a \$35 entry fee.

The pageant originated under Dr. J.S. "Cotton Joe" Mogford. "The reason it was always such a major event was because cotton played a major role in this state," Mogford said.

Mogford is retired from the Department of Soil and Crop Sciences and lives in Bryan.

Originally, profits from the pageant paid expenses for several agronomy students to take a world cotton tour and see the process of cotton manufacturing from harvest to market.

Now the pageant earnings are used for Agronomy Society field trip expenses.

Tickets for the first and second pageant were 50 cents a person for the banquet and \$1.50 a couple for the pageant. The first few pageants were held in Duncan Dining Hall.

Admission for the 47th Cotton Pageant to be held Saturday in Rudder Auditorium is \$2 for students and \$3 for non-students. Tickets for the Cotton Ball, with music provided by the Aggieland Dance Band, are \$6 a couple. All tickets may be purchased in Rudder Box Office.

King Cotton and eight dukes are elected prior to the pageant by members of the Agronomy Society. Ricky Rice, a senior agronomy major from Wilson, has been elected the 47th King Cotton. He is also president and social secret-

ary of the club, which has 55 members.

Approximately 80 duchesses and their escorts will attend a square dance Friday night at Zachry Engineering Center. "This is just an informal get-together," Staten said.

The women will be interviewed by three judges at a tea and reception Saturday.

Queen Cotton and eight princesses will be selected at the pageant. The Reveliers, directed by Robert L. Boone, will provide entertainment.

The women are presented as if in a fashion show rather than a traditional competition-style show. They are presented in formal dress and are not judged on talent.

Dr. R.C. Potts, who is retired from the College of Agriculture, is the master of ceremonies for the pageant.

For the first pageant, the National Cotton Technical Institute furnished dresses to be modeled. In the next few years, dresses were also supplied by a dress manufacturing company in Kansas City and department stores in Houston. Finally, too many stores became interested in supplying dresses, so now the women purchase their own dresses.

Gov. Miriam A. Ferguson attended the pageant in 1933 to witness 100 women participate and more than 1,000 people watched. Staten expects about 700

people to attend the pageant on Saturday.

It snowed at 3 p.m. on April 7 before one of the early pageants, Mogford recalled. "Gas stoves were strung up all over the old gym," he said. "When you hear the phrase 'picking violets out of the snow,' that describes what those women looked like that day ... just beautiful."

Due to World War II there was no pageant for a couple of years because most Texas A&M students were fighting in the war.

Judson E. Loupot, owner of Loupot's bookstore, was the third King Cotton. The second Queen Cotton was Phyllis Matlock, president of the student body at the Texas State College of Industrial Arts for Women (now TWU) and the third was Anne Staude.

No information is available

which gives the names of the first King and Queen Cotton. Mogford said the first King Cotton selected his own Queen and later married her.

Last year's winner was Carol Briggs, a senior bioengineering major from Paris, Texas. King Cotton was Brian Weiss, a senior agronomy major from Pflugerville.

The winner receives only the title as reward for her efforts. "In the past, there has been some discussion of trying to get a hook-up between the Cotton Pageant and the Miss Texas contest," Staten said. "At this time, no connection is possible. We would have to follow the rules and regulations of the Miss Texas contest, which may not coincide with our own rules and regulations."



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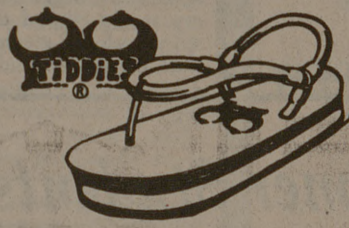
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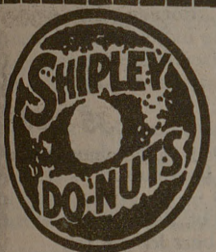
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