

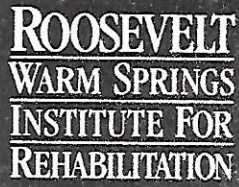


# *"Springs of Dreams"*

*Ms. Wheelchair America*  
*Warm Springs, Georgia*  
*September 7, 1996*







Inpatient and Outpatient Rehabilitation ■ Vocational and Independent Living Services ■ Research, Education and Technology

*Welcome from the Executive Director  
of the  
Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute  
for Rehabilitation*

On behalf of our students, patients, and staff, I am pleased to welcome you to the 1997 Miss Wheelchair America program and to the Roosevelt Institute.

Dreams do come true! We are realizing the dream of our founder, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who once wrote, "Someday perhaps Warm Springs will be a vast establishment with hundreds of people...if it is, and we could continue the same kind of spirit that exists today, there is no question that no place in the world would give finer results, both to the body and to the spirit." Founded in 1927 by President Roosevelt, the Institute has grown from a facility serving polio patients to one for people with many different kinds of disabilities. These include spinal cord injuries, strokes, head injuries, developmental disabilities and orthopedic and neurological disorders. Even though RWSIR is one of the nation's oldest comprehensive residential rehabilitation centers, we now provide a full-range of rehabilitation services that include medical rehabilitation, vocational rehabilitation and independent living skills training. The Institute is now a facility of the Georgia Division of Rehabilitation Services.

During the past few years, we raised \$11.2 million in public-private donations to construct a Center for Therapeutic Recreation on our campus. The Dedication Ceremony for this state-of-the-art recreation complex took place on August 5. We are planning major renovations of our hospital building, East Wing, and the Roosevelt Hall auditorium and lobby which will provide up-to-date facilities for our inpatients and students, and for our community friends and events such as this wonderful pageant.

We had the pleasure of hosting Miss Wheelchair Georgia here at the Institute for several years and Miss Wheelchair America in 1985. We know the excitement that all of you are experiencing this week. We are indeed proud to once again play a small part in helping you realize your dreams.

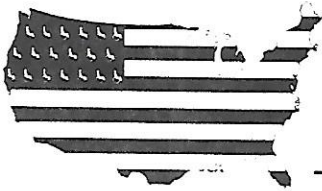
Sincerely,

Frank C. Ruzycki  
Executive Director









*Ms. Wheelchair America Inc.*

**TOM O'BRYANT**  
**PRESIDENT**

16 GLENARDEN ROAD ☐ TRUMBULL, CONNECTICUT 06611 ☐ TELEPHONE & FAX (203) 452-0630

September 1, 1996

TO: Contestants, Companions, Family Members, Sponsors, and Friends of Ms. Wheelchair America  
FROM: Tom O'Bryant, President

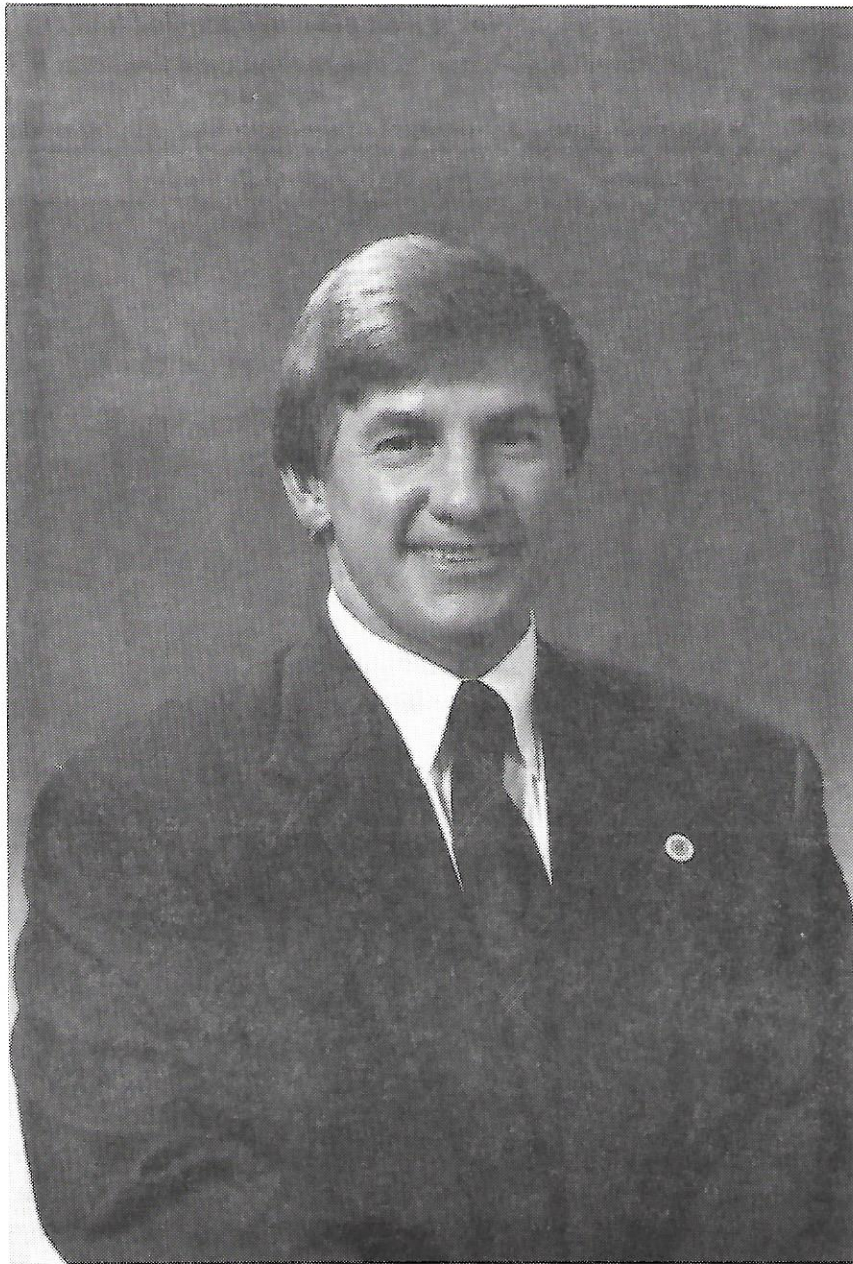
This year the Ms. Wheelchair America Program is twenty-four years old. In 1972, Dr. Philip K. Wood, a Columbus, Ohio psychiatrist, established the Ms. Wheelchair Program as a forum to publicize the accomplishments of disabled women in wheelchairs. Since its inception, Ms. Wheelchair America titleholders have dedicated their reigns to raising the awareness levels of the public to the accomplishments and abilities of persons with disabilities, using their personal achievements as an example. Through their efforts, many of the stereotypes and attitudinal barriers have been changed for the better.

In recent years, Ms. Wheelchair America titleholders have traveled extensively throughout our nation to share their message. Their efforts have included numerous interviews in print, radio, and television; visits with local, state, and federal elected officials; and, in recent years, each titleholder has had the opportunity to visit the White House and meet with the President. We are proud of their accomplishments and truly feel their efforts are making a difference for persons with disabilities.

On behalf of the Board of Ms. Wheelchair America, I am pleased to welcome all of you to Warm Springs. We hope you will enjoy the experience and take the opportunity to learn more about the Ms. Wheelchair America Program. We urge each of you, especially the contestants, to get involved and support their state programs. Your involvement will ensure the continued success of your state program and will allow other talented women in wheelchairs the chance to participate in this incredible experience.

Lastly, I would like to recognize the efforts of Gail McKoon and her volunteers for all the hard work that has gone into the planning and coordination of this annual event. I would also like to thank Frank Ruzyski and all of the wonderful people at Warm Springs for making us all feel so welcome. I again welcome each of you and ask that you join us in celebrating the accomplishments of our contestants.





*Congratulations and Best Wishes to Each Delegate !*  
from Bobby G. Peters, Mayor of Columbus



*Greetings from the Columbus, Georgia  
Planning Committee of the  
Ms. Wheelchair America Program*

The Columbus Planning Committee extends a sincere welcome to everyone attending the 1997 Ms. Wheelchair America Program. We hope you enjoy your stay in the beautiful and great state of Georgia!

We are so grateful to our many sponsors and donors for making this event possible. Our success is possible because of their generosity, support and commitment. We owe our Mayor, Bobby G. Peters, a huge "THANK YOU"! He is always so supportive of our projects and activities.

"THANK YOU" also to Frank Ruzycki and his wonderful staff for providing such a wonderful setting for this year's program and for making us feel like "family".

Special thanks also go to Tom O'Bryant for his tireless efforts on our behalf and to Amy Baxter who helped me laugh through the difficult times.

Gail McKoon, Host State Coordinator

Martha Donaldson  
Linda Jones  
Susan Cureton  
Greg Vernon  
Randy Smith

John Donaldson  
Greg Clark  
Betty Payne Taggart  
Jackie Vernon  
Ed Wilson

Mike Owens  
Joe Riddle  
Cookie Watts  
Beth Holloway  
Randy Long





*Ms. Wheelchair America, Inc.*

## MS. WHEELCHAIR CREED

*As Ms. Wheelchair, I promise to do my utmost  
to promote public awareness of the disabled . . .*

*And to give unstintingly of my time and effort  
to this purpose . . .*

*To strive to achieve the best that is  
within me . . .*

*To offer my hand in friendship to everyone  
I meet . . .*

*To be cheerful, honest and loving . . .*

*To give hope to the less fortunate . . .*

*To set an example by my attitude . . .*

*And to do all of this with grace, warmth  
and dignity.*



# PURPOSE AND GOALS OF THE MS. WHEELCHAIR AMERICA PROGRAM

The Ms. Wheelchair America Program is in no way a beauty contest. It is, instead, a competition to select the most accomplished and articulate spokesperson for other persons with disabilities in the United States. The selected representative must be able to communicate both the needs and the accomplishments of her constituency to the general public, the business community and the lawmakers. She is charged with a continuing effort to educate the public regarding the dignity, productiveness and basic value of disabled people. She assumes the responsibility for the ongoing effort to eliminate the architectural and attitudinal barriers that prevent people with disabilities from assuming their rightful place in society.

As Ms. Wheelchair America, her duties are numerous. Each year she has the opportunity to travel, visiting advocacy groups, making the public appearances and conducting television, radio and print interviews in the fulfillment of her major responsibilities. These include promoting awareness of the needs of disabled persons, creating an awareness for the need to eliminate architectural and attitudinal barriers, informing the able-bodied public of the achievements of physically disabled people across the nation.

We plan and conduct a four day event to select our new Ms. Wheelchair America. The Program is more than just the judging panel and one 'winner' named. We schedule workshop sessions where we offer interesting topics of personal enhancement for the women, whether about grooming, communication and interpersonal skill development, networking with community programs or other educational topics. We offer 'free time' to allow for information exchanges between contestants to take place. Many new friendships are started from the Program, as the women validate the fact they are not the only one to use a wheelchair and experience some of the things they share with each other. The Program offers an opportunity to enjoy four days at a luxurious hotel setting where the contestants are really treated as 'special guests.' The Program is much more than just a healthy competition . . . it's an opportunity to see the potential within and to challenge personal growth.

The Planning Board for Ms. Wheelchair America is made up of volunteers from many different community organizations, businesses, private citizens, and previous title holders. There are few administrative costs to the Program. All expenses for hosting the Program, travel for Ms. Wheelchair America and expenses associated with the national Ms. Wheelchair America Program must be secured through various fund-raising efforts, donations, etc. We welcome your assistance.







## ***STATE COORDINATORS***

### ***MS. WHEELCHAIR AMERICA PROGRAM***

***1996***

Pam Renshaw  
118 Loneoak Drive  
Harvest, Alabama 35749  
(205) 830-5760

Ellen Ruhlmann  
1265 E. University Drive  
Apartment #1044  
Tempe, Arizona 85281  
(602) 968-6284

Debbie Thompson  
1549 Dumar Avenue  
El Cajon, California 92019  
(619) 588-8010

Beverly Dreith  
16405 Radcliffe  
Aurora, Colorado 80015  
(303) 690-8620

Gail McKoon  
Mayor's Committee for Persons with Disabilities  
P.O. Box 1340  
Columbus, Georgia 31902-1340  
(706) 571-4906  
(706) 563-4768

Doris Olds-Eck  
121 Green Spring Drive  
Annapolis, Maryland 21403  
(410) 721-0936

Bob Harris  
Box 321  
Livingston, New Jersey 07073

Robin Heffner  
219 Classic Court  
Mount Holly, North Carolina 28120  
(704) 827-6301

D.J. Lucas  
Route 4, Box 1150  
Bishopville, South Carolina 29010

Juliette Rizzo  
220 Green Springs Circle  
Sanger, Texas 76266

Mary Lynn Van Hulten  
2144 Sorrento Drive  
Woods Cross, Utah 84087



# *Ms. Wheelchair America Program*

## *Schedule of Events*

*September 4 - 8, 1996*

Tuesday and Wednesday, September 3rd and 4th - Arrival Days

### **WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4TH, 1996**

Judges Orientation - Huntington Cottage - 6:15 P.M.

Contestants Orientation - Lodge #1 (Callaway) - 6:15 P.M.

Dinner:

Buses begin loading at 6:45 from Lodges for Clubhouse

Attire:

Super Casual - Shorts, T-Shirts, Cut -offs, Jeans, etc.

Buses loading at 9:00 for trip back to lodge.

### **THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 5TH, 1996**

Judging Sessions (Business Attire) - 9:00 A.M. - 12:00 Noon

(ALL JUDGING SESSIONS ALL WEEK WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING IN THE LARGE CONFERENCE ROOM)

Workshop 9:00 A.M. - 12:00 Noon

#1 "Sexuality" presented by Glenn Kersey, RN, R.W.S.I.R. 9 A.M. - 11 A.M.

#2 "Personality & Make-up Trends" presented by Mable Bailey  
and LaDonna Cowart of MB Modeling 11 A.M. - 12 Noon

(ALL WORKSHOPS ALL WEEK, EXCEPT SATURDAY, WILL BE PRESENTED IN ROOSEVELT HALL LOBBY)

Lunch Buffet

12:30 P.M. - 1:30 P.M. Dining Room

(Must have meal ticket to go thru line)

Georgia Hall

Vans Load in front of Georgia Hall for Lodges

1:30 P.M. - 1:45 P.M.

Escort Orientation

(Delegates selected) 3:00 P.M. - 3:30 P.M.

(Roosevelt Hall Lobby)

(Vans Load from Lodges to Little White House at 3:30 P.M.)

Warm Springs Tour of Little White House

3:45 P.M. - 5:00 P.M.

(Vans Load from Little White House for Warm Springs Shopping Trip at 5:00 P.M.)

Shopping in Warm Springs

5:15 - 7 P.M.

Merchants Association (Cookout)

7 P.M.

Attire: Casual (Shorts sets, Slacks, or Sun Dresses)

### **FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 6TH, 1996**

Judging Session - 9:00 - 12:00 Noon

(Business/Professional Attire)

Large Conference Room - Administrative Building)

Workshop - 9:00 - 10:30 A.M. (TBA)

MWA Board Meeting - 9:00 - 12:00  
Roosevelt Hall (Stage Area)

Lunch - 12:30 P.M. - 1:30 P.M.  
Georgia Hall Dinning Room  
(Must have meal ticket to go thru serving line)

Judging Sessions - 2:30 P.M. - 4:30 P.M.  
Large Conference Room - Administration Building

Workshop - 3:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.  
"How to Start and Build an MWA Program in your State"  
Presented by Tom O'Bryant, President - MWA

(Buses begin loading at 4:30 P.M. in Front of Georgia Hall for Lodges)

Dinner and State Gift Exchange -6:00 P.M. - 8:45 P.M.  
Attire is Casual

(Buses begin loading at 5:45 P.M. from lodges for Georgia Hall Dining Room)

(Buses begin loading in front of Georgia Hall for Lodges at 8:45 P.M.)

### **SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7TH, 1996**

#### **SUPER CASUAL ATTIRE FOR EVERYONE UNTIL TONIGHT!!!**

10:00 A.M. - 12:00 NOON

10:00 A.M. - 11:00 A.M.

1:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.

2:00 P.M.

3:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.

4:30 P.M. - 5:30 P.M.

7:00 P.M.

Judging Sessions

Wheelchair Aerobics Workshop

Location TBA

Hair, Makeup, & Nails (In your lodge)

Delegates and Companions will be served sandwiches  
in lodges.

Practice with Escorts

Photography Session

Ms. Wheelchair America Program and Coronation

### **THIS IS A FORMAL EVENT**

9:00 P.M. - Midnight

Coronation Celebration/Dance/Reception - (Dining Room Georgia Hall)

### **SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8TH, 1996**

#### **SUPER CASUAL ATTIRE FOR EVERYONE!!!**

10:00 A.M.

Queen's Breakfast. (Gifts for the Title Holder and Runners-Up will  
be presented at this time. This event will be at the Clubhouse.

12:00 P.M.

M.W.A. Board and New Ms. Wheelchair America meet in Peabody Cottage  
Check--out and Transportation to the Airport on Sunday

***THANK YOU FOR BEING OUR GUESTS THIS WEEK!***



## JUDGING CRITERIA

The Ms. Wheelchair America judging is based upon criteria established by the national committee of the Ms. Wheelchair America Program. The following excerpts were taken from official guidelines:

A. ACCOMPLISHMENTS (40%)

1. Personal achievements/accomplishments since onset of disability only in the following areas: \*Academic \*Vocational \*Personal
2. Adjustment to disability.

B. COMMUNITY SKILLS (40%)

1. Ability to deal with media, peers, civic groups, etc.
2. Public Relations Skills.
3. Advocacy for persons with disabilities.
4. Self-confidence/motivation/initiative/creativity.

C. SELF-PERCEPTION/PROJECTION (20%)

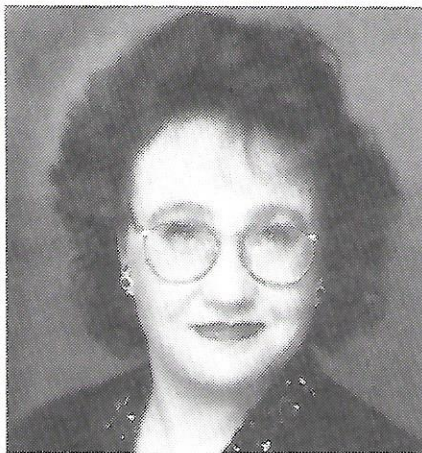
1. Poise, demeanor.
2. Appropriate attire, personal presentation..

\*Ms. Wheelchair America is not a beauty contest and this category is not taken as a license to choose the most attractive entrant. Instead, the items in this category are simply to express a desire to have a pleasing appearance capable of obtaining favorable responses from any audience before which Ms. Wheelchair America would appear.

Ms. Congeniality is chosen by the contestants for this year's pageant for her friendly and cheerful personality and her helpfulness to them during the program weekend.

## LET'S MEET OUR JUDGES

Jo Ann Howell  
JUDGING COORDINATOR



Jo Ann was born in Oakdale, Louisiana, but has spent the majority of her life in Columbus.

In the past, she has been a bookkeeper in a department store, a substitute teacher for 5th grade, and has even run a home day care center.

Jo Ann keeps busy as a volunteer for ACCESS, Freedom for Handicaps, The Jerry Lewis Telethon, and the Columbus Mayor's Committee for Persons with Disabilities. She has recently started a Post-Polio Support Group.

Jo Ann has twice won the prestigious Achievement Award in the Ms. Wheelchair Georgia Pageant.



**Angeline H. Pinckard**  
**HEAD JUDGE**



Angeline Pinckard is employed by the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services as the Executive Director of the Alabama Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities where she works with and represents people with disabilities in the state of Alabama. She has served in this position for two years and has conducted over 175 workshops for consumers and businesses regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act, specializing in Accessibility, Title II and Title III.

Angeline has a Bachelor of Arts in Music Education and a Masters Degree in Counseling and Human Development from Troy State University, Montgomery, Alabama.

Prior to working for the Division of Rehabilitation Services of Alabama, Angeline worked as a Public School Music Teacher at Ft. Rucker Elementary School and Green Gate Kindergarten and Pre-School in Montgomery.

Angeline is affiliated with the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, serves as State Chairperson for the National Organization on Disabilities, National Association of Governor's Committees. The Disability Rights and Education Defense Fund (DREDF) Training Network, Alabama Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities. She was also named Handicapped Woman of the Year (1967) by the Business and Professional Women's Club of Troy, Alabama; Disabled Professional Woman-of-the-Year (1988); and received the Victory Award for the State of Alabama (1990).

**Solomon Walker**  
**JUDGE**



**Sol Walker is the past Chairman and CEO** of the Pilgrim Health and Life Insurance Company. He is currently employed at the Medical College of Georgia as Coordinator Specialty Service Contracting.

Born and educated in Atlanta, Georgia, Sol received a B.S. Degree in Business Administration and Doctor of Laws from Morehouse College.

Sol is also on the Board of Trustees, Paine College; Board of Trustees, Roosevelt-Warm Springs Foundation; Board of Advisors, The Small Business Development Center, University of Georgia; Board of Directors, 100 Black Men of Augusta; Board of Directors, Augusta Jazz

Project; Past Board Member, State Board of Human Resources; and a member of the 1996 Class of Leadership Georgia.

He and his wife, Patricia Moore Walker, reside in Augusta, Georgia. They are the proud parents of four adult children, Christopher, Kenya, Jennifer, and Albert.

Sol has judged in two previous Wheelchair programs.



Phyllis Clark Nichols  
JUDGE

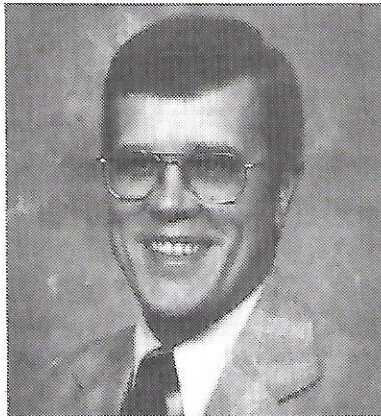


Phyllis Clark Nichols is Executive Vice President Corporate Affairs of KALEIDOSCOPE Television, a national cable television service featuring programming of interest to 49,000,000 Americans with disabilities and their family members.

A native Georgian and graduate of Valdosta State College, Mrs. Nichols moved to Fort Worth, Texas where she received her Masters of Music Degree. Before going into the television business, Phyllis was a composer, arranger, recording artist and soprano soloist in major oratorios and performed on stage and television. She still enjoys performing when her schedule allows.

Mrs. Nichols and her husband, Dr. Bill Nichols, President /CEO of KALEIDOSCOPE, reside in San Antonio, Texas. They were both founders of KALEIDOSCOPE Television, and announced the launch of this innovative network from the capitol steps in Austin on July 26, 1990 at the same time President George Bush was signing the Americans with Disabilities Act. They share their passion for their work, their love of the arts, and their life goals of encouraging and assisting others to discover and develop their life potentials. The Nichols have two daughters, Kimberly and Christina.

R. Stan Wayland  
Judge



Mr. Wayland is currently employed in the Southeast Civilian Personnel Operations Center (SECPOC), Fort Benning, Georgia, where he joined the staff in February 1996. Prior to this assignment, Mr. Wayland spent more than 30 years in Federal Civil Service in such capacities as a Personnel Management Specialist, Personal Staffing/Classification Specialist, Employee Relations Specialist, Management Analyst, Program Analyst and is currently a Personnel Staffing Specialist in the Delegated Examining Unit, External Unit of the SECPOC.

Stan is a native of Atlanta, Georgia and currently resides in Marietta, Georgia, with his wife, the former Teresa Daniel, of Savannah, Georgia. They have 3 grown children and 4 grandchildren. He attended Sacramento State College, DeKalb Junior College and Georgia State University majoring in Business Management. He and his family are members of Gospel Harvester Church in Marietta, Georgia. He has served as a member of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities; Selective Placement Office for Special Programs with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and is currently associated as a supporting colleague of Howard University, Research and Training Center for Access to Rehabilitation & Economic Opportunity, Washington, D.C. Mr. Wayland is a Vietnam Era Veteran and served an additional 18 years in the U.S. Air Force Reserve. Stan is also the proud recipient of the Meritorious Service Award from the Georgia Rehabilitation Services for his work in placing people with Disabilities while at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Dawn Blodgett  
JUDGE



Dawn Blodgett, a former Ms. Wheelchair America (1994), currently lives in Costa Mesa, California.

She travels as a motivational speaker around the United States, challenging her audiences to "Face their fears and follow their passions".

Dawn is a full time student with a major in Psychology and a minor in speech.

Currently, Dawn is a volunteer for the AIDS RESPONSE PROGRAM, involved in providing client-centered counseling to individuals receiving their HIV/AIDS test results.

*Thank You*  
*Warm Springs Area*  
*Tourism Association*  
*for Thursday Night's*  
*Cook-Out!*



**SUZANNE HUDSON**  
**Mistress of Ceremonies**



Suzanne is currently a news anchor and reporter for WLOC-TV in Asheville, North Carolina. She graduated Summa cum laude from DePaul University in Chicago in June of 1987, with a B.A. Degree in Communications. Since that time, she has had extensive experience working with the news media.

Suzanne was a National Collegiate Communications Arts Award winner in 1991, and was also named "Outstanding Young Woman of America."

She has volunteered with the Muscular Dystrophy Association, the Cystic Fibrosis Association, Special Olympics, and Easter Seals of Columbus. This is her fifth year as Mistress of Ceremonies for the Ms. Wheelchair Georgia Pageant. She also served as Mistress of Ceremonies for the 1994 Ms. Wheelchair America Pageant.

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**Thank You!**

**ESCORTS and COLOR GUARD**

**Courtesy of**

**U.S. Army Infantry Center**

**Fort Benning, Georgia**

# *Ms. Wheelchair America Program 1997*

*presents*

## *"Springs of Dreams"*

*September 7, 1996*

### PRESENTATION OF COLOR GUARD

"The Star Spangled Banner" .....Karen Faircloth

"Battle Hymn of the Republic".....Wendy Greiner

### PARADE OF CONTESTANTS

"High Hopes" .....Jewett Wynne

Brian Sikes

### OPENING & WELCOME

Introduction of Mistress of Ceremonies.....Mike Owens, President

Ms. Wheelchair Georgia Pageant

Introduction of Frank Ruzycki, Executive Dir.....Roosevelt -Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation

Introduction of Reigning Ms. Wheelchair America.....Amy Baxter

Introduction of Judges and Judging Criteria

"Three Coins in a Fountain" .....Britton McMullian

### CONTESTANTS IN EVENING WEAR COMPETITION

"River of Dreams" .....Brian Sikes

### CONTESTANTS IN INTERVIEW

"I've Got Rhythm" .....Brea Vaughn

### CONTESTANTS IN REVIEW

"When You Wish Upon A Star" .....Britton McMullian

### JUDGES DELIBERATION

Special Award Presentation.....Tom O'Bryant, President, MWA

Entertainment.....Wendy Greiner, Britton McMullian

Brea Vaughn, Brian Sikes

Jewett Wynne, Karen Faircloth

"Memory" .....Karen Faircloth

Special Presentation.....Amy Baxter

Ms. Wheelchair America 1996

Farewell to Reigning Ms. Wheelchair America

"Reach" .....Jewett Wynne

### ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNERS

People's Choice, Congeniality, Achievement, 2nd & 1st Runners-Up

### PRESENTATION OF MS. WHEELCHAIR AMERICA 1997

"You Are So Beautiful" .....Brian Sikes

### RETIREMENT OF COLORS

Coronation celebration immediately following in dining room.







*A Fond Farewell from Amy Baxter*  
*1996 Ms. Wheelchair America*

Three hundred, ninety two days ago, I lived the most exciting moments of my 31 year old life. Surrounded by dear "old" friends, family members, and new friends in Anaheim, California, I was crowned the 23rd Ms. Wheelchair America. It was truly a night to remember!

Helen Keller said, "We could never learn to be brave and patient if there was only joy in the world." All of the candidates have come to Warm Springs with the hope, perhaps even the expectation, of winning. There can be only one titleholder, but you are all WINNERS. By becoming a candidate you have demonstrated qualities of courage, strength, optimism and risk taking. My hope is that regardless of the pageant outcome, you will be very glad you came to Georgia.

May each person here resolve to help expand the Ms. Wheelchair America program, to widen it's scope and to build support in all of the Fifty States. This is an outstanding program that remains unknown to much of the general public. We are all "fighters" gathered for this experience. It's going to take every one of us to support this program, to help it grow and succeed.

My "thank you's" for the past year, if I were to list them all, would take the remainder of this program. The biggest thank you goes to my parents, it's because of them I have achieved all that I have achieved. Thank you Mom and Dad for your undying support. Thank you to my fiancée, John, who has loved and supported me during this hectic year. Thank you to Gail McKoon, who has been there every minute of my year, helping in every way. Thank you, Tom O'Bryant, for being such a wonderful businessman and caring about the endeavors of the MWA program. Thank you to the friends who support me in all that I do. Thank you to Ann Blackstock, my greatest supporter and scrapbook chairman, and Dawn Blodgett, my mentor. And a very special thank you to American Airlines, who has sponsored me and my widespread travels of the past year. Without American Airlines, this year would not have been possible. You are ALL truly "Angels Among Us."

I have traveled over 45,000 miles, delivered countless speeches, and exchanged thousands of smiles. I come now to share in the crowning of the 24th Ms. Wheelchair America. Remember why you're here, and what it means to be crowned Ms. Wheelchair America. It is not for the publicity, glory and self-promotion. As Ms. Wheelchair America 1997, you will be a spokesperson and a role model for the 49 million Americans with disabilities. What a worthy and honorable endeavor!

In summation, it won't be easy. You may lose and feel disappointment. But if this title is a goal you truly covet, make plans now to try again. I know I will continue to support the MWA program and work to advance its message. Win or lose, you leave this historic and inspiring place with all of my admiration and very best regards.





## *Joanne James*

Colorado

Age: 48

Home: Berthoud, Co.

Disability: Spinal Cord Injury (T-12/L-1) July 1975

Education: BS/Education, MA/History, MA/English

Describes Herself As: Intelligent, Caring, Creative, Independent and Responsible

Achievements and Interesting Information:

Joanne is the single mother of 2 daughters. She owns a 9 acre farm and breeds miniature horses, which she has been trying to promote as a recreational alternative for disabled people. Joanne is professionally and personally active in disability education, specifically, sexuality and parenting. She also teaches, directs and produces youth and adults in drama and musical performances. She is co-author of "Handbook on Sexuality-after SCI", and has published several articles in Spinal Network.

*SPONSORS: Berthoud Feed & Seed, Pizza Corral, Berthoud National Bank, Keith Feight Agency, Loren Gray, Joan and Dean Memering, Lois Herbage, Charles Hillary, David Dryer, Jim Graham, State Farm, Rae Fetherling, Steve Cogswell, Jane Wallower, Margaret Lahner, Barns by Gardner, Berthoud Arts & Humanities Alliance, Cottage Realty, Maggi Realty, Lakewood Kiwanis, The Music Factory, Nic Newby, DMD, Pioneer Bank of Berthoud, Renee Arko, Lynda Percival, Clara Lee Moodie, Stu & Barbara Boyd, and other friends and family.*



## *Nelda L. Kampff*

Florida

Age: 37

Home: Tampa, Florida

Disability: Accidental Shooting, December 1981

Education: Presently seeking Mass Communication Degree

Describes Herself As: Dedicated, Determined, Motivated, Effective and Outgoing.

Achievements and Interesting Information:

Nelda keeps very busy in her local community affairs. She believes that each individual holds importance within their community. Nelda refers to herself as a "Professional Volunteer." Nelda has served on the Mayor's Alliance for the Handicapped, Board of Advisors for Abilities Rehabilitation Center, Board of Directors of Self Reliance Center for Independent Living, along with numerous others. She is also co-coordinator for her neighborhood crime watch. Her many awards include "The Abilities of Florida Distinguished Service Award for Leadership." She hopes to some day teach school and have a series of children's books published.

*SPONSORS: Quality Suites Hotel, Amy's Carpet Service, Frog's Cleaning Service, Linda Fogarty, Jamie Perry, All Participants of Charity Golf Tournaments, Participants of Glamour Shots Fund Raiser, Wayne Helmbrecht, Greg Kampff.*





## *Teresa Diane Reagan*

Georgia

Age: 27

Home: Centerville, Florida

Disability: Spina Bifida

Education: Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communications and Theater Arts - Mercer University

Describes Herself As: Genuine, Intuitive, Articulate, Understanding, Confident

Achievements and Interesting Information:

Teresa hopes to establish three organizations: Lifeline Ministries, a program to help needy people by providing fund-raising events to help with food, clothing, medical expenses, etc.; the Rose Foundation, a three month program providing room, board and counseling to sexually abused people; and Wheelchair Friendly, an organization to recognize the efforts of businesses, churches, and other organizations who go beyond the letter of the law to insure the comfort and convenience of persons with disabilities. She is currently employed by the Herald newspaper in Warner Robins, Georgia, and does motivational speaking in her spare time.

*SPONSORS: The Cantrell Center, Gold's Gym, Glamour Shots, Holiday Inn-North, Macon's Mayor's Commission, Margaret Bowman Methodist Church, Weight Watchers, Ms. Wheelchair Georgia Pageant.*



## *Shannon Diane Gibson*

Illinois

Age: 25

Home: Springfield, IL.

Disability: Spinal Cord Injury (T6-7/1-2) October 1990

Education: Certified Nurse Assistant, Working on Masters in Political Science/Pre-Law

Describes Herself As: Highly Motivated, Adaptable, Good Listener, Creative and Confident

Achievements and Interesting Information:

Shannon is employed with the Soyland Access to Independent Living, as a Personal Assistant Specialist. She is very active in her community as a Girl Scout Troop Leader, American Association of People with Disabilities, Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities in Illinois and Fifth Street Renaissance. She has traveled central Illinois with the "Risky Business" program, talking to students about prevention of head or spinal cord injury. Shannon's long range plans include becoming a Civil Rights Attorney and someday holding public office.

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## *Judy Hoit*

Iowa

Age: 51

Home: Iowa City, Iowa

Disability: Polio - July 1949

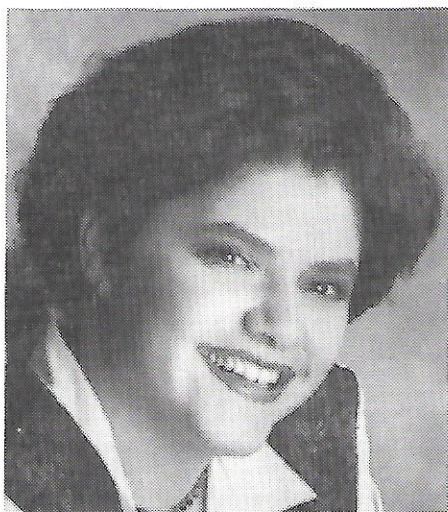
Education: Has been involved in college work at UI in Liberal Arts August 1989 and Continuing Education August 1990 to December 1991. Fall 1992, Spring - 1996 - Kirkwood Community College.

Describes Herself As: Charismatic, Outgoing, Determined, Survivor, Caring

Achievements and Interesting Information:

Judy lives independently in her own apartment. She is currently employed by the University of Iowa, Hospital School, as a receptionist in the main lobby where she checks in patients, answers phone and gives directions. She is a member of Iowa Polio Survivors, was 1950 March of Dimes poster child. She received the 1974 Award for Gallantry from the Easter Seal Society, the 1991 Handicapped Woman of Iowa award, and the 1991 Certificate of Commendation from the Governor of Iowa. Her goal is to educate the public about accessibility through conducting workshops and writing more articles.

*SPONSORS: Dale Clark Prosthetics, Winebrenner Ford, Ms. Wheelchair Iowa, Coralville Animal Clinic, Hills Bank and Trust Company, Family and Friends.*



## *Benita Hope Gold*

Maryland

Age: 28

Home: Frederick, Maryland

Disability: Familial Spastic Quadraphrisis

Education: BA Degree Music Education

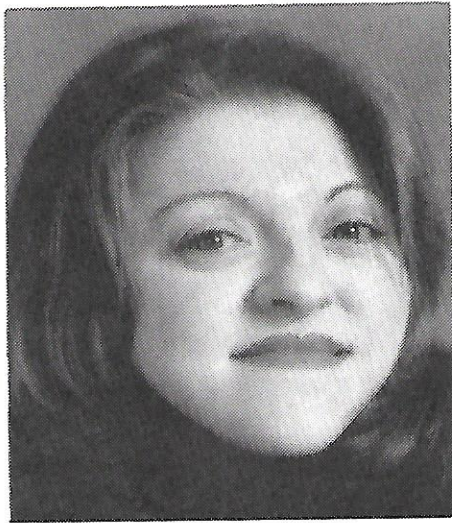
Describes Herself As: Relentless, Energetic, Humorous, Lovable and Knowledgeable

Achievements and Interesting Information:

Benita is a classical saxophonist, performer, composer and teacher who shares her gift of music with the world. She teaches high school music in the Frederick County Md. public schools. Through the Very Special Arts Program, an affiliate of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and founded by Jean Kennel Smith, Benita has performed as a soloist and with orchestras throughout the U.S. and in Scotland and Belgium. She hopes to release her first compact disc recording this year. Benita has been asked by Very Special Arts to compose, direct and perform in a musical which won the Young Playwright's competition.

*SPONSORS: Robert Watson, Executive Director, DateAble*





## *Maria J. Clark*

New Jersey

Age: 28

Home: Bridgewater, N.J.

Disability: Osteo Genesis Imperfecto

Education: High School Graduate and Clerical Training Program

Describes Herself As: Funny, Vivacious, Sensual, Loving and Dynamic

Achievements and Interesting Information:

Maria shows examples of advocacy in almost everything she does. From Project Take-Charge-facilitation for teaching self advocacy to being a spokesperson for United Way of Central New Jersey to disability awareness seminars. She is also the creator and host of the Open Circle talk show. The Open Circle is a New Jersey cable cast and discusses social issues and their impact on people with disabilities. Maria is also very involved in theater with numerous stage credits throughout New Jersey and even including an off-broadway play.

*SPONSORS: Robert Harris, John Graham - Fairview Associates, Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation*



## *Lawana Walker*

North Carolina

Age: 55

Home: Reidsville, North Carolina

Disability: Born without lower extremities

Education: Bookkeeping, Accounting-Davison Tech. School

Describes Herself As: Persistent, Caring, Outgoing, Dedicated and Thoughtful

Achievements and Interesting Information:

Lawana works as a telemarketing operator for a cemetery. She is active on the Mayor's Committee for Person's with Disabilities in Reidsville. She has also worked with WAEU-TV, on a program called "God Loves Handicaps", about different disabilities. She also speaks to schools and church groups about awareness and accessibility. She lists two of her biggest achievements as learning to drive a car and living on her own.

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*Wendy Ricks*

South Carolina

Age:23

Home: Marietta, South Carolina

Disability: Spinal Cord Injury (C-6/7) June 1992

Education: Junior, USC at Spartanburg

Describes Herself As: Happy, Patient, People-Person,  
Somewhat Passive and Generous

Achievements and Interesting Information:

Wendy hopes to soon complete her BA Degree in Elementary Education and then obtain a Master's Degree in Special Education. During her schooling she has been on the Dean's List and President's Honor Roll. With the help of the Campobello Fire Department, she has just purchased a van with hand controls and is now taking driving lessons.

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*Teresa "Teri" Rheault*

Texas

Age:42

Home: Denton, Texas

Disability: Polio

Education: High School Graduate, Some College

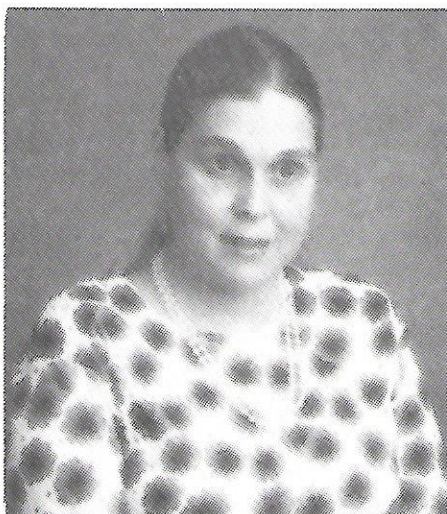
Describes Herself As: Intelligent, Involved, Friendly,  
Happy and Spoiled

Achievements and Interesting Information:

Teri lives with her husband, French, 2 dogs, 12 fish and one snake. She manages their large lawn maintenance business and a small multi-level marketing business. She is very active in her community serving on numerous committees within the business, civic and advocacy areas. She works with her community on ADA compliance and speaks often on disability issues. Teri is listed in "Who's Who of People Who Have Made A Difference". Their business-Frenchy's Lawn and Tree Service, was selected "State of Texas, Keep Texas Beautiful, Small Business of the Year 1995".

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## *Deborah Lee Bettess*

Utah

Age:43

Home: Salt Lake City, Utah

Disability: Blind from birth, Degenerative Joint Disease since 1990

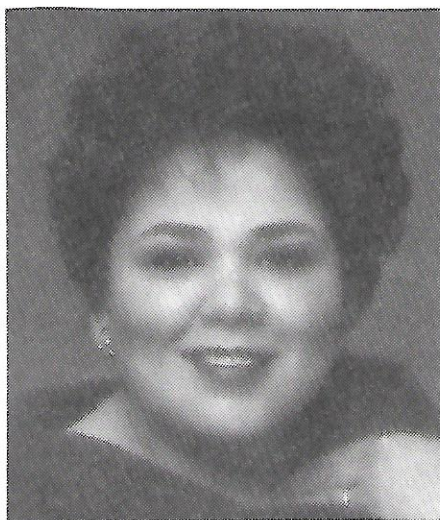
Education: BA Music 1981, magna cum laude, Master of Science, Recreation and Leisure

Describes Herself As: Advocate, Volunteer, Justice-seeker, Compassionate and Determined

Achievements and Interesting Information:

Deborah is an active volunteer in a number of community and service organizations. She spends her time doing advocacy work for disabled, low income and elderly, particularly in areas of housing, health care reform and ADA compliance. She has won numerous scholastic awards, and certificates of achievement for voluntary works. Her many awards include "You Can Make A Difference" award from Legislative Coalition for People with Disabilities.

*SPONSORS: Ms. Wheelchair Utah*



## *Elaine C. Stefanowicz*

Washington

Age:31

Home: Tacoma, Washington

Disability: Spinal Cord Injury (T-7) June 1982

Education: High School Graduate and Technical School Training in sign language and secretarial courses

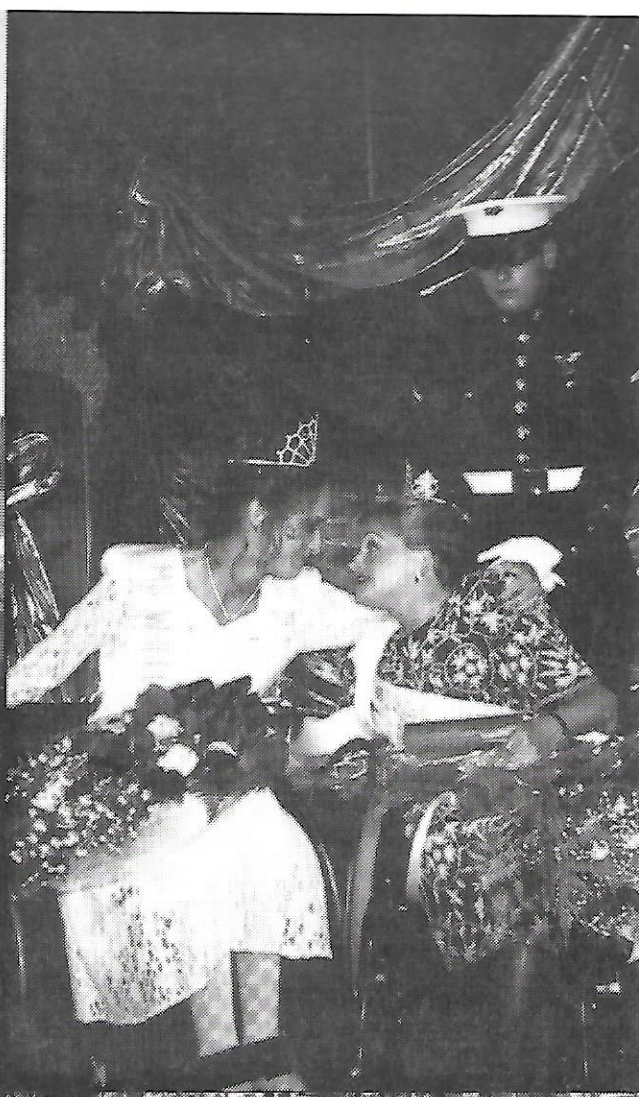
Describes Herself As: Warm, Friendly, Vivacious, Funny and Empathetic

Achievements and Interesting Information:

Elaine is currently secretary to the President, University of Puget Sound. She is very active in the community including peer counseling at Good Samaritan Hospital and a TTY Phone Operator. She is an active speaker on the Risk of Drinking and Driving. She has worked for ADA compliance in numerous office buildings and schools. Elaine is currently working with Weight Watchers International to develop a "Special Needs" weight loss program for members with limited mobility. She wants to be known as a person who "makes a difference."

*SPONSORS: Good Samaritan Hospital, Medical Rentals, Elks Club, Cost Plus Prescription, Friends at Neville's Shoreline, Maryanne Ellis, Paul Robertson, Jack and Jenell Coughlin, Friends at the University of Puget Sound, The Bon March'e, Nordstrom, Numerous Tacoma Businesses who donated auction items.*







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*Wendy Petzold - Wisconsin*  
*Dawn Shannon Blodgett - California*  
*Kim Mensi - Alabama*  
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*Mercedes Rodriguez - Florida*  
*Jewell Massey - Georgia*  
*Peggy Simpson - Alabama*  
*Sandia Honbaier - North Carolina*  
*Donna Cline - Nevada*  
*Lori Cottam - Utah*  
*Gaynell Colburn - Maryland*  
*Barbara Crozier - Alabama*  
*Marian Schooling Vessels - Maryland*  
*Vivian Thompson - Massachusetts*  
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*Marge Chmielewski - Michigan*  
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*Beverly Chapman - Florida*  
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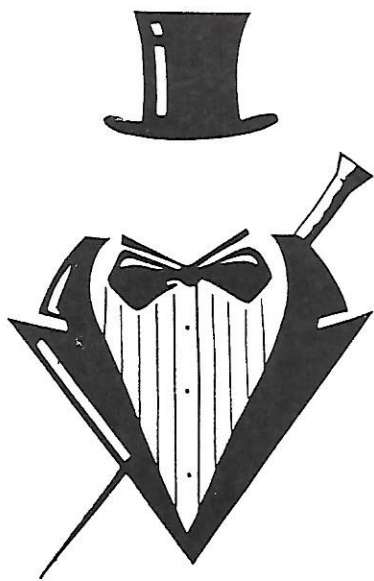
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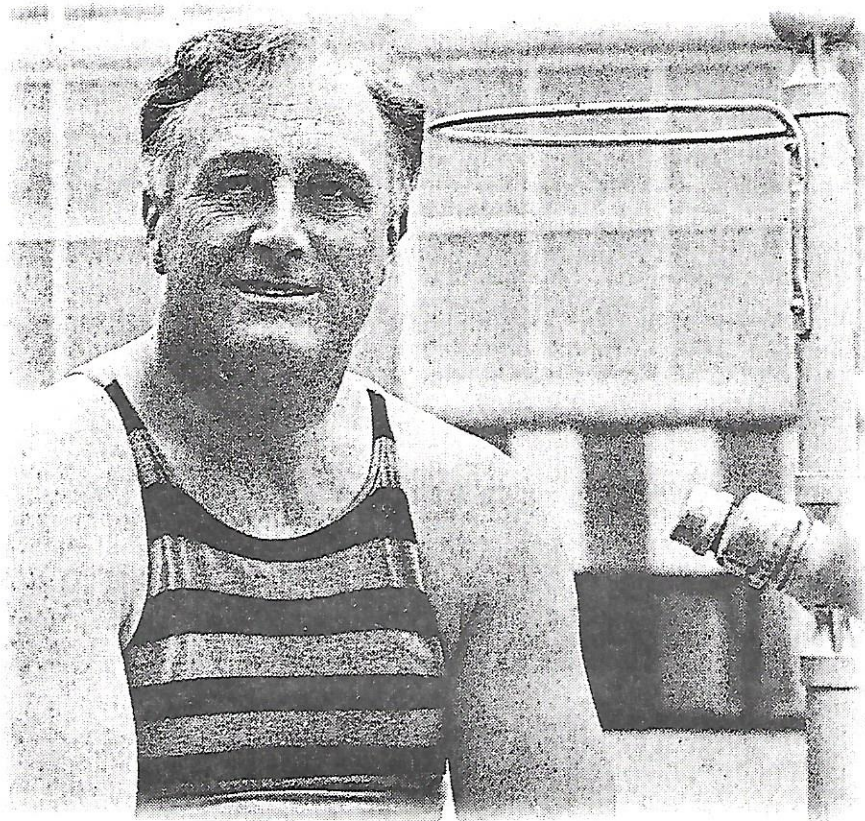
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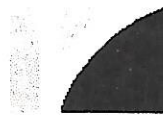
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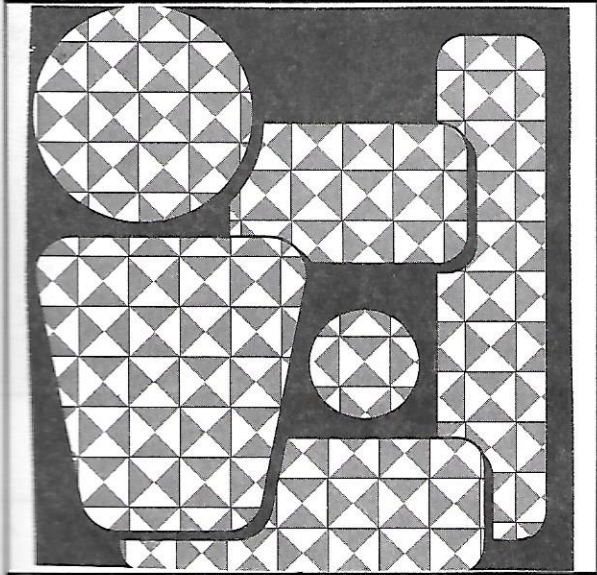
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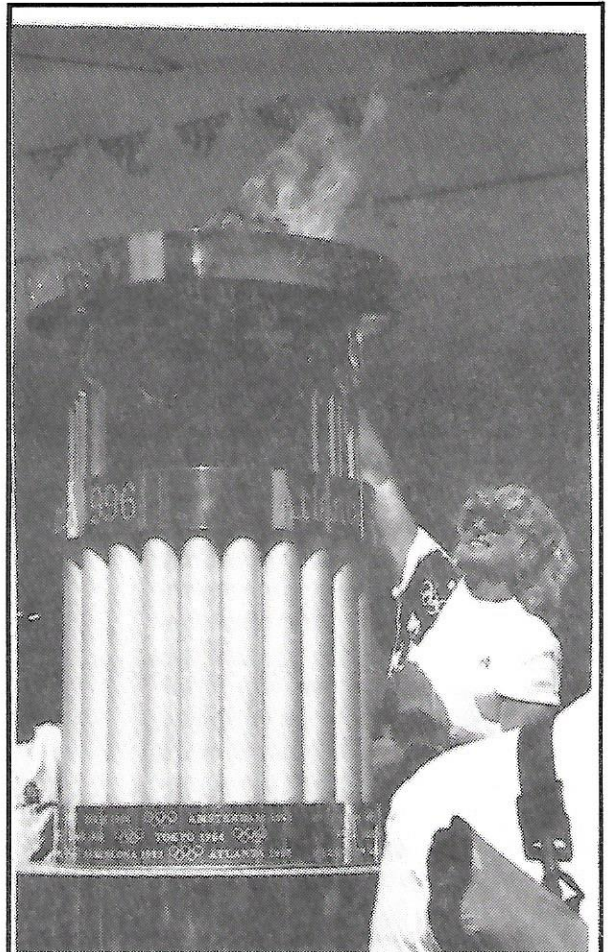
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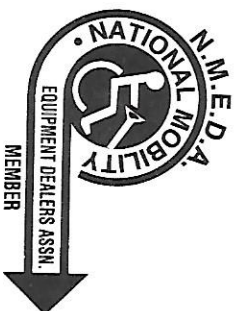
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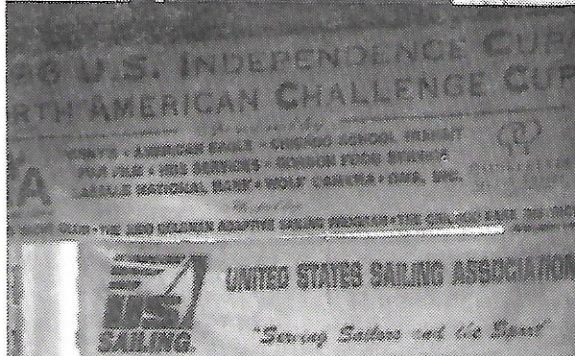


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