

The Southcoast TRIBUNE

Ms SENIOR SWEETHEART PAGEANT, 2013

21 YEARS OF COMMUNITY NEWS BY COMMUNITY PEOPLE • COVERING THE GOOD STUFF ON THE SOUTHCOAST FOR TWO DECADES



Judges Chair Attorney Rene Brown and Usher Chair, Vice President, Chuck Gregory.

There are some things that age with grace and dignity, get better as time goes by. Cheese and casks of wine come to mind, whiskey, of course.

Some things don't age well: the couch in the cellar man cave, the canoe hanging in the garage, the wicker furniture in the back yard you never really used and left out all winter for twenty years.

Some things smell moldy, like your old Uncle Ernie, the relative you don't let your kids visit anymore.

Then there are the pure aspects in life that mature gracefully, seem to get sweeter with the passage of time, become more realistic, if you will.

Such a concept, thing, reality (fill-in-the-nomenclature) is the Ms Senior Sweetheart Pageant of America, Inc/International. It is celebrating its 35th Anniversary this year.

The pageant is more than a show. It is a work of art that depicts the nature, beauty, determination and personal values of women over the age of 58-years-old.

It is not a Picasso. There is no guess work here as to what the subject matter is. It is a Thomas Kinkade lighted artwork that illuminates the stage with the contestant's beams of pride on it. It has Star Trek-style rays of tears and hope in the eyes and hearts of husbands, boyfriends, children, siblings, nieces, nephews, grandchildren and, yes, great-grandchildren, watching as the lady who changed their diapers 70-years-ago, who is now changing their minds about what growing older

really means.

Contestants come from around the world, the United Kingdom, the colonies, virtually every island you can name that we're not fighting with, just about every state in the union. The current Queen hails from the British Cayman Islands. Her name is Celina Dilbert.

This year there is a contestant who hails from Korea in the line-up. She calls Philadelphia her home, now. Moon Chang will soon be living at the Hampton Inn in Westport starting on October 17th. That's when the contestants, their guests, most of the five former Queens, and other VIPs haul into town for their 11-day visit to the Southcoast.

There are 12 contestants this year, which is a very comfortable level. It makes for a tighter show.

For the first time there will be mother/daughter entries. Mary Lee Pompeii and her daughter, Diane Bombardier are both vying for the title of Queen. They will perform separately. Both ladies hail from Attleboro, MA.

The opening press conference will be held at Fall River's Government Center, with Mayor Flanagan as host. Lunch will be served in the atrium.

HERE IS A SPECIAL NOTE: MAYOR WILL FLANAGAN PURCHASED ALL THE PAGEANT TICKETS AND IS GIVING THEM AWAY. Tickets are available at all BankFive locations, all senior citizen centers and from Chuck Gregory or Len Kaplan, if you can catch up with them. I would suppose the pageant planning committee members will also have supplies on them.

It should also be noted that the pageant has always held a special place in Mayor Flanagan's heart, his aunt, the late Rita Caouette, was a former Queen and served royally during her tenure.

Len Kaplan and I met with the mayor on his couch in the front office on the 6th floor of Government Center. I offered the ticket proposal, Len said "Yep, that's the offer" and "Will" jumped on it, noting, "I'd be happy to do that."

We all shook hands, took (stole) some candies from the dish on the desk and the world moved on.

The planning committee

this year consists of Dorothy Soczek, Andrea Barron, Carolyn Burton, Heather Salva, Barbara Parente, Yvette Mancini, Charlie Noversa, Morella Fredricks, Annette Gamache, Shannon Dallaire, Wayne Lima and Bruce Rex.

The pageant headquarters is, as usual, the Hampton Inn, Westport, Ma.

The extensive rehearsals will take place around the area including at White's of Westport and other venues. The ladies and the troupe will perform throughout the Southcoast at care homes and special events.

The judges chairperson is Attorney Rene Brown, the ushers and special events chairman is Chuck Gregory. The onstage ushers will be City Councilors Dan Rego, Michael Miozza, Ray Mitchell and council candidate Paul DaSilva.

The judges names are revealed the day of the pageant.

Did I mention Len Kaplan? There are several icons in Fall River that pop into the mind, notably, the Rolling Rock, the city hall over the highway, Dave's News, Coney Island hot dogs, and Low Price Lenny Kaplan.

Last year at the pageant Mayor Flanagan and the City Council authorized "Len Kaplan Day." Because Kaplan is in retail, everything on the proclamation was 10% Off. Len went to Government Center having no idea what had been set up in his honor. He cried.

He is tough to ignore.

THE AGING PROCESS PERSONIFIED

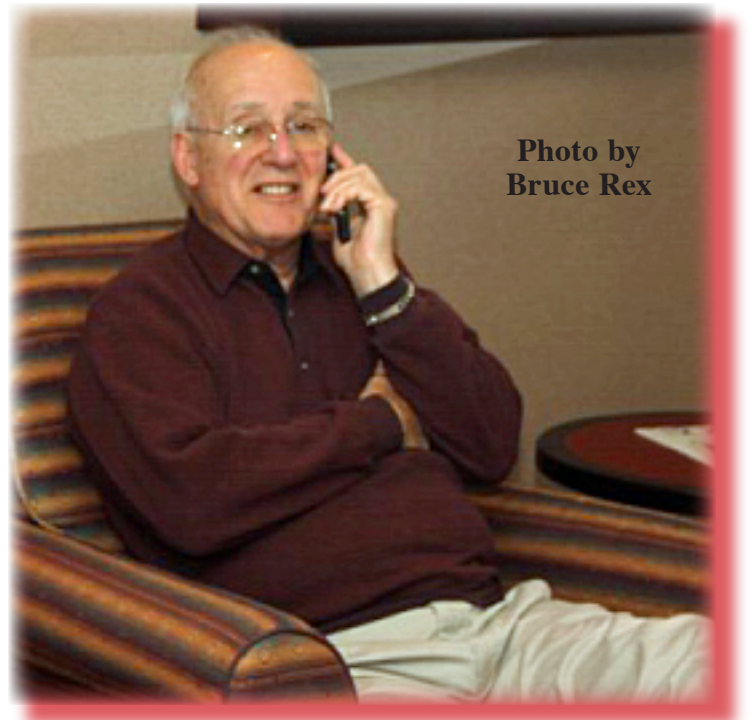


Photo by Bruce Rex

Len Kaplan, as usual, on the phone

When he says "Hello" to someone at the main post office, people at the other three city post offices turn around to see who is speaking.

He is a little loud, but that goes far beyond verbalization. His heart is the loudest part of his persona. There isn't a person who needed help with personal matters, a buck or two for coffee, a ride, an ambulance, a smile or a hand shake that Len Kaplan ever turned down.

Besides family matters and business, the pageant is his entire life. He has told senile folks and year-old-toddlers to watch the trailer "Pretty Old" noting its about the Ms Senior Sweetheart Pageant. He always asks, "Do you have a computer?" I constantly remind him that he is the only person on the

planet without a computer.

Oh well. Be that as it may, the general knowledge is he can't sing a note worth a damn. That could not be further from the truth. When he is serious he can sing with the best of them.

At the end of this pageant I will demand that he sing "My Way," his own way. The band knows the song.

There will not be a dry eye in the house, nor should there be. The first line of the song is "Now the end is near"..... Talk about heart breaking! Sniff.

Below: Queen Rita Ann Batram with L-R: City Councilor-Elect Paul DaSilva and City Councilors Dan Rego, Ray Mitchell and Michael Miozza



RITA ANN BATTRAM FIGHTS ODDS - WINS PAGEANT



The 2013 Ms Senior Sweetheart Pageant and her Court: Center Queen Rita Ann Battram; L-R: 4th Runner-up, Diana Bombardier; 2nd Runner-up, Ida White; Queen Battram; Sally Ann Vick, 1st runner-up; Ruth Berkel, 3rd Runner-up.

Ms Bombardier also took home the Flaming Glow Award (Ms Congeniality), as well as an award for being part of the pageant’s first mother (Mary Lee Pompeii) and daughter entries.

Southcoast News FR, MA - An overwhelming crowd took part in the 35th edition of the Ms Senior Sweetheart	Tribune Pageant of America, Inc/ International in the Robert Nagle Auditorium at B. M. C. Durfee High School on October 27th.	Rita Ann Battram, from Michigan and, now, Washington State, is this year’s jubilant winner. She exclaimed wildly after
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Mayor Will Flanagan sponsored all the ticket sales for the 2013 Ms Senior Sweetheart Pageant; Joining him are the pageant judges. Front: State Representative Carole Fiola, Mayor Flanagan, Elaine Lima, Judge’s Chair Attorney Rene Brown; rear: Somerset School Committee Vice Chairman Mark Costa; Cara Solomon, Alex Stylos and Bernadette Driscoll. Not shown: Tita Tanquay, Auditor.

**Tribune
Photos**

HEY, KID, CAN YA PLAY IT BACKWARDS?

One of the hits of the show was when Noah Salva got up and followed Len Kaplan around as his shadow. The 15-year-old Westport High student wowed



the crowd as he sang with Len, then sang solo, then matched dueling Kazoos with the legendary senior icon. They even played the music backwards. Duh! The crowd went nuts. A star is born. (last name - Arc.)

left: Noah “Arc” Salva and Len Kaplan

realizing that she was chosen, “This is a miracle for me.” Rita Ann is blind in one eye and has serious vision problems in the other, legally blind.

Her Court consists of 1st Runner-up; Sally Ann Vick, 2nd Runner-up; Ida White; 3rd Runner-up; Ruth Berkel; and 4th Runner-up, Diana Bombardier.

Diana also won the Flaming Glow award (Ms Congeniality); Mary Lee Pompeii and Diana Bombardier were cited as the first mother/Daughter combo and Moon Boo Chang was acknowledged for her Korean ancestry.

On-stage personalities included Len Kaplan, Master of Ceremonies, Chuck Gregory, Heather Salva, Yvette Mancini and Barbara Parente, Noah Salva, Dorothy Soczek, Rene Brown, Cheri Ann Schear, Steve Aguiar (BankFive), and Mayor Will Flanagan.

The ushers were City Councilors Daniel Rego, Michael Miozza & Ray Mitchell, and (now) City Councilor-Elect Paul DaSilva.

The Judges are pictured left.

Music and sound were provided by Michael Kalisz, Kathy Morris was the Pageant Director, while the live band was The Notables, with Brian Bigelow sitting in on drums, joined with Bill Guilmotte on synthesizer.

The stage designer was Annette Gamache aided by John Costa, Wayne Lima, Andrea Barron, Carolyn Burton, Shannon Dallaire, Andrea Barron, Bruce Rex & Charlie Novera. Also assisting over the top were trolley drivers: Jason Desmarais, Bill Sutton & Kevin Pires.



Mayor Will Flanagan gets acquainted with planning committee member Morella Frederick.

Plans are in motion for the Ms Senior Sweetheart Pageant’s 36th Anniversary. The Planning Committee will meet right after the New Year and will then set the dates for 2014. Len Kaplan has already inquired about availability at the Hampton Inn, the band and discussed programming and publicity with Chuck Gregory and Heather Salva (and a great opening procession). Wow!!! Get Ready! Here we go again!



L-R: Len Kaplan, Marty Tuohy, Queen Carol Tuohy and stylist Urban Medeiros.

The pageant season starts when the first lady gets her hair done. This year that would be Queen Carol Tuohy who let her future lay in the hands of Urban Medeiros of Urban Elements.

Letter To The Editor
The Southcoast Tribune
Dear Chuck Gregory,

As you know, The Ms. Senior Sweetheart Pageant of America, Inc/ International hosted its 35th annual pageant this past October in the Robert J. Nagle Auditorium at B. M. C. Durfee High School. Twelve contestants, ages 58-87, wowed a packed auditorium with their talent and charm, while competing for the title of Queen, 2013.

Congratulations to our new 2013-2014 Queen, Rita Ann Battram, from Washington State!



Heather Salva

This year's pageant was another great success. I would like to thank all those responsible for making this happen beginning with our generous sponsors: our major sponsor BankFive; and Karam Financial Group, Borden & Remington, St. Anne's Credit Union and BayCoast Bank.

Thank you to the following for our dinners and luncheons: Mayor Will Flanagan, the Greater Fall River

Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Stop & Shop, the Marine Museum, Diman Regional Vocational Technical High School, White's of Westport, Crystal Springs, Landmark Assisted Living, the Catholic Memorial Home and Whaler's Cove in Dartmouth.

Thank you to the following media outlets who provided coverage both during the pageant and throughout the year: The Southcoast Tribune, WSAR, Wayne & Faust, Herald News, The Fall River Spirit and FRED TV.

To all the merchants who provided special gifts to fill a beautiful bag for each contestant: thank you for your continued support. Thank you to all the judges and escorts, Mallard Printing, Fall River Graphics, The Hampton Inn, Drewbie's and Urban Medeiros for hair and makeup. Thank you Ken Pacheco, Director of Community Maintenance for providing transportation, and drivers Jason Desmarais, William Sutton and Kevin Pires.

Thanks goes out to Mike Kalisz for the great sounds, Bill Guillmette and the Notables with Brian Bigelow on drums for band music, Wayne Miranda for the on-stage musical interludes, Durfee High School for use of their facility, Kathy Morris for choreographing the stage production and Mayor Flanagan for purchasing all of the tickets so everyone could come to the show free of charge for our BIG 35th anniversary!

We thank you all and anyone else we may have missed and look forward to seeing everyone next year!



Truly Yours,
Len Kaplan, President
Heather Salva,



Left: With the champagne of bottled cheers and imitation chocolate Krackle are: Heather Salva, Walter Mattesen, Yvette Mancini, Len Kaplan and Beverly Kaplan out on the porch on Darling Street in Nantucket.

Right: Hanging out on a Nantucket beach are: L-R: Marty Tuohy, Sharon Maloney, Carol Tuohy, Ida White (rear), Diane Keaton, Constance Gabriel, Charlotte Ambrose and Phyllis Chickett. The Senior Sweethearts had a great time with Ms Keaton, an internationally acclaimed actress.



Right: The crew getting on the plane at New Bedford Municipal Airport to go to Nantucket



At a fish shop: Josh Alexander, Trish Govoni; Rear: Walter Matteson, Connie Gabriel, Charlotte Ambrose, Ida White, Carol Tuohy and Sharon Maloney.



Photos on these pages were taken by Chuck Gregory and Heather Salva, with Andrea Barron and Constance Gabriel, contributors.

And then there there is this memorable moment in pageant history

Sr Sweetheart Pageant Documentary #1

“Pretty Old,” a 4-Star Feelgood Film, Is Smash @ CA Film Fest
Ladies Great! Kaplan Singled Out As One-Of-A-Kind

By Chuck Gregory

The **Ms Senior Sweetheart Pageant of America, Inc/International**, founded in Fall River, has been one of the featured documentaries at California's **Santa Barbara International Film Festival** and has apparently walloped viewers and the press.

The 87-minute entry took the first-place Documentary Award

The 87 Minute entry took the **First Place Documentary Award**, a most prestigious accomplishment if there ever was one.

The ladies and men who attended the red carpet event had left after their week long stay at the festival so the award was presented to Walter Matteson, the Director. The Executive Producers of the film were **Sarah Jessica Parker, Joe Berlinger and Alison Benson**.

As it turns out, by no slight of hand, the crowd favorite was “Low Price” Lenny Kaplan, although the ladies are all spectacular in their work and portrayal.

The documentary, which was shot across the United States is primarily involved in contestant's soul, Fall River and surrounding communities, spotlights all aspects of this wonderful endeavor which began as a fundraiser for the Fall River Lions Club in 1978. Since then, founder Mr. Kaplan has nurtured the event (and other pageants) for 33 years. The pageant has brought hundreds of contestants from around the world to this community annually for 11-days a year of fun, serious competition and carmaraderie.

Based around the activities of four past contestants, **Michael Rechtshaffen of the Hollywood Reporter newspaper** says, “the engaging documentary, **Pretty Old** is pretty terrific.” And, “The film struck a chord at its **Santa Barbara International Film Festival** premiere and deserves greater exposure beyond the fest circuit.”

The documentary examines their trials, tribulations, aspirations, failures and successes. As with all contestants each person is an individual thriving for a bright future.

The film highlights Michigan native **Tamara Swihart** (who has written for the Tribune,) **Ida White**, from the Virgin Islands, **Phyllis Chickett** from Minnesota and the late **Francis Christian**.

Mr. Michael Rechtshaffen adds, this “little community fundraiser has blossomed into something totally unexpected and quite special - just like those later-in-life contestants in the film that tells their inspiring story.”

From The Santa Barbara Independent newspaper, Matteson says, “It's a slick, smart, and eye-opening production, sure to warm the hearts of young and old while teaching what real beauty is all about”

And, “These are out-going women who are very comfortable within their own skin. However, for many of them this has not always been the case.”

Also, “the ladies were all cooperative, “It would have been impossible to capture what we did (in the film) without their trust.”

The summation of Low Price Lenny by Matteson is this, “Simply a larger than life character who commands an audience big or small and will absolutely make you smile. He is also very emotional and just thinking of a fond memory or friend will bring tears to his eyes. He is one of the most interesting people I have ever met. A truly inspiring person, bursting at the seams with life and energy.”

The videographers included Mr. Mattesen and Trish Govoni, with Mattesen and Josh Alexander as screenwriters.

All in all, this is one of Greater Fall River's finest moments.

The complete review has been posted at: www.hollywoodreporter.com/prettyold.

The documentary will now be featured in other major film fests, including Seattle and New York City, as well as the already planned on Boston Film Fest.

You can Google the trailer at <Pretty Old Trailer>, then hit TRAILER and voila!

This story has had more than 56,000 hits.



Tribune Photo

Low Price Lenny Kaplan



Top: Front: Barbara Parente; Rear: Charlotte Ambrose, Chuck Gregory, Annette Gamache, Walter Matteson and 2012 Queen Dorothy Soczek.

Above: Phyllis Chickett, Dorothy Soczek, Barbara Parente, Yvette Mancini, Len Kaplan, Charlotte Ambrose and Carol Tuohy; Rear: Sharon Maloney, 2011 Queen Constance Gabriel and Ida White.



There is the serious side to the Ms Senior Sweetheart Pageant which includes, above, L-R: Chuck Gregory, Vice President of Marketing and Special Projects; Kathy Morris, the Stage and Show Director; and Len Kaplan, Founder and President of the Pageant's corporation. Here they are discussing matters with 8th Bristol District State Representative Paul Schmid back stage. Then there is the Men's Night celebration. In order to protect their identities we will not name these people from the Pageant's Witness Protection Program.

HULA NIGHT? OMG!



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Above: Marty Tuohy, the 2nd best looking person in a dress at the pageant's Men's Night Out. Who is first? Everybody else!



On Nantucket Island even the trash barrels have character.



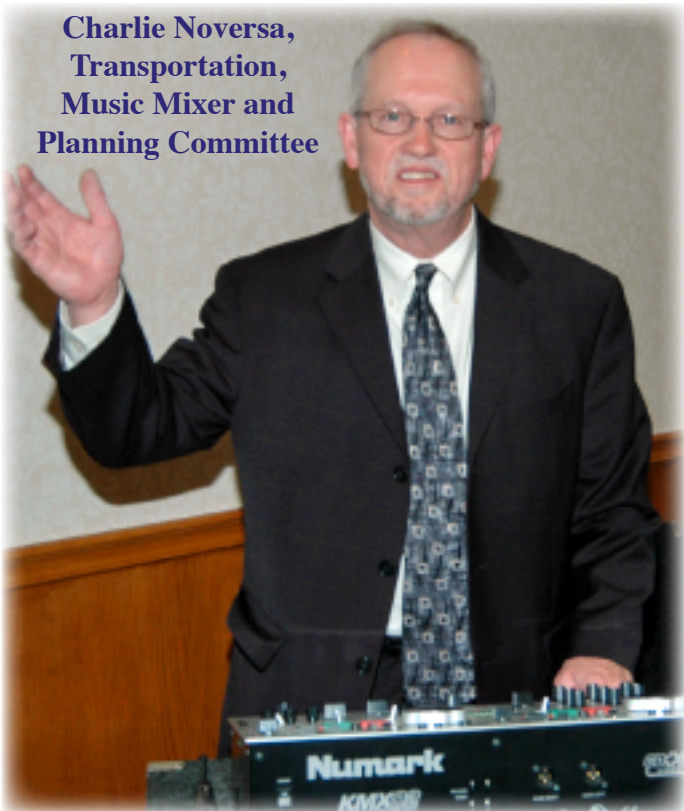
Len Kaplan on stage at a pageant final.



Walter Matteson went to Nantucket and caught an imaginary fish thi-i-i-is big.



Queen Constance Gabriel and Len Kaplan, President and Founder of the Pageant.



Charlie Noversa, Transportation, Music Mixer and Planning Committee



Bruce Rex
Pageant Committee member and Photographer



A few years ago our entourage went to Heritage State Park and visited the Battleship Massachusetts at battleship Cove in Fall River, The Big Mamie". Tours are a great added attraction to a trip to the Ms Senior Sweetheart Pageant. You never know what's coming up next. Newport Playhouse, anyone? Duck boats?

For More Nantucket Film Festival Photos Visit Senior Queen 'Constance Gabriel' on Facebook

ACK

Diane Keaton & Connie Gabriel

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21 Years of Community News By People From The Community • Pageant Stuff, 2013.

For information about joining the pageant, financing, sponsorships, volunteer work or any subject concerning this International Senior event Call Mr. Kaplan at 508-675-0249 and you will be directed to the correct person to discuss matters with you.

Failing to do that, please call Chuck Gregory at 508-493-2883 for assistance.