



THE SOUTHCOAST TRIBUNE

IN OUR 15TH YEAR OF HOMETOWN NEWS BY PEOPLE FROM YOUR HOMETOWN

..... The following pages are columns based on Mr. Gregory's observations. The first part is an updated re-run, while the roast and pageant columns are new. The Tribune went out of its way to show everyone involved with the pageant, thus some people are in multiple photos.

You may advise friends they can also go to www.msseniorsweetheart.com or www.southcoasttribune.com to view the pages.

We begin....

..... Besides the agonizing logistics of geography and paperwork - and the fact that I finally care for someone other than myself, this week was one of the better weeks out of, let's say, the last 104 weeks.

I heard the rumors that the Boston Red Sox won the World Series; The New England Patriots have a heck-of-a-squad, the Boston Bruins actually have a team organized for the season and the Boston Celtics have more than a playground-scrubs pick-up squad to do battle on the parquet floor of what I still call Boston Garden. (I think it is the Home Depot Gymnasium now, or some other ridiculous name, like 'Mary Kay Place'.)

Whatever, those are just things that cause us to think about life, there are other things that are real life. Yes, life we can touch and it doesn't cost us an arm and a leg.

For example, there are, (is?) the Senior Sweethearts. A subject near and dear to my heart. Collectively, they are the reason my friend Len Kaplan still flies at a high altitude, soars with angels and walks with his shoulders back and his head erect. The Ms Senior Sweetheart Pageant is his passion, his zest and zeal.

Even though Len is Jewish, I can use this simile, (or is it a metaphor?) the pageant is a very wonderful gift under his Christmas tree of life.

This is a 29-peat performance and a very special year. The cutoff was at twenty four contestants and things were running smoothly. Then we got the news that Phyllis Chickett had a mild heart attack and would not be coming this year for obvious reasons. She's a great lady and a lot of fun. She will be back next year for our thirtieth anniversary. The world will be a better place with her around.

While Len and me get a lot of the press and credit for the pageant, there are a myriad of great volunteers who put the darn thing together, especially Marion Gagnon, Len's Assistant and Jerry Gamache, Special Projects Coordinator and Transportation Specialist. Wayne Lima and Mark Harrison are on staff, as well, along with a host of others on the Planning Committee, Geri McCrea, Joyce Szelag, Yvette Mancini, Barbara Parente.

That group's photo is in this layout with other pageant news.

The dinner theatre! "Oy, such a tour we took to Newport, RI," as Len would say.

Jerry Gamache set up a visit to the Newport Playhouse & Cabaret Restaurant in, well - of all places, Newport. Included in the night-out was a tour around 12-mile-drive, you know, Bellevue Avenue, Hammersmith Farm, the Vanderbilts', industrial mucky-mucks' summer cottages, etc.

I was chosen to be the tour guide, which ended up with me explaining where Len met Beverly, where I asked Geraldine to marry me, where Bob Dylan and I smoked - a Lucky Strike - and stuff like that. It was a fun tour, but the best was yet to come.

Our transportation was a Howard Bus Company coach. Our bus driver Rick, he notes that people call him, er, Rick, was a perfect host.

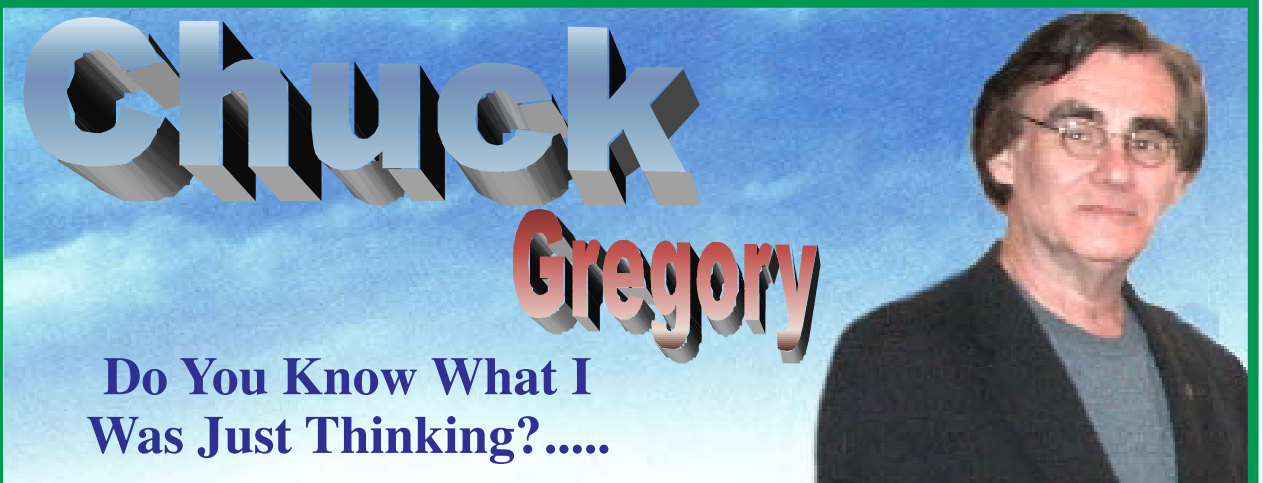
Let me tell you this - the Newport Playhouse & Cabaret Restaurant is the best deal on the island, barring no place else.

Forty selections on the buffet line, great calorie laden huge dessert choices, prompt waitstaff, big many-size plates that you have to lug with a tow motor and you get clean metal tableware. Wow!!

Did I mention the playhouse? "Remember Me?"

No, not ME -- the play, "Remember Me?" A one-act play with a half-dozen lights-out (fade to black quickly) and four characters. Five if you count the fantasy old-boyfriend Peter (and really, who wouldn't)?

Funny, thoughtful, a few surprises, full of sins of the mind and heart and a great cast. The dialogue is crisp, no wasted words and no



Do You Know What I Was Just Thinking?.....

THE SR. SWEETHEARTS



Tribune Photo

The contestants in the 2007 Ms Senior Sweetheart Pageants of America, Inc., at Battleship Cove in Fall River. The ladies and their entourage enjoyed a great luncheon at the Fall River Carousel, sponsored by Stop & Shop. Each lady was formally introduced to the press.

2007 Ms Senior Sweetheart Queen Carol Tuohy and Her Court



Phot by Bruce Rex

L-R: Lynette Schlager, Nevada, 2nd Runner-Up; Frances Christian, Texas, 1st Runner-Up; Carol Tuohy, 2007 Ms Senior Sweetheart Pageant Queen, Virgin Islands; Divina Alora-Jacome, Philippines; and Sharon Maloney, Michigan, 3rd Runner-Up.

extra ones either. To the point which was - excellent.

The curtain comes down (actually the stage goes dark) about an hour after the opening scene. Your night has been a memorable one.

Hey, where are you going? Everyone goes back to the dining hall where 'The Cabaret' hits the lighted and small, but efficient, stage.

Our host is "Kyle" a talented gentleman with an impish smile and quick wit. He magically

turns on the lights with a swagger and arm gestures and leads the ensemble in music and song.

Is it your birthday? "Well we have a special song for you." (There were three birthday-people in thee hall. Guess what their individually offered special song was?)

While all are very good routines and skits, the standouts are U-N-C-O-U-P-L-E-D (spelled

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with cue cards for 'Those from Fall River' and "Crazy," which was performed for anyone in the audience that had a heart.

The take-off on HEE HAW was a hoot and worthy of an award of some type just based on the "Patooee - she was gone," song.

The next day we ate with Michael Coughlin, Director of the Department of Health and Pauline Gousie, assistant director of the Council On Aging at Fall River's Government Center. Dorothy Biltcliffe and the staff put together a great feed again this year.

Plus, this was the first public affair



Ruth Berkel was in fine form, as usual.

for Mayor William Whitty.

His brief talk was personal, funny, entertaining - from the heart. When I mentioned that he would now sing a song I thought he was going to pass out, so Lenny sang instead. Not well, mind you, but he sang anyway.

Mike and Pauline gave out gifts to the ladies and Jerry Gamache passed out 2007 pageant stamp cancellations to everyone.

I was fortunate enough to be part of the Fall River Mayoral citation



Front Row: Ida White and Constance Gabriel; rear: Carolyn Beach, Ann Tucker

presentations as Bill greeted each lady with a hug and a photo op with cameraman Bruce Rex. I forget who it was, but one lady asked Bill if he was married?

Crystal Carvalho, at the Mayor's reception desk, was instrumental in the citation preparations and Mr. Whitty signed each one personally.

Anne O'Neil-Souza, Whitty's Administrative Assistant pulled everything together from her end and the day went off without a hitch.

To continue, by the time you are reading this the talent portion of the pageant has passed and the ladies are looking forward to their interviews and the pageant finals at Durfee High School.

Then comes Monday, for me the worst day of the year. This is the only day of the year when I don't enjoy being me.

The ladies and their guests get transported away. Some fly, some bus ride, some drive. All you see are the back of their heads.

For the past 11-days, there are

moments you can't forget, the seconds that fill-in the gaps between rehearsals, dinners and coffee klatches. Such as , my care about Ruth Berkel and Jeanne Schutte being ill; a heart-saving conversation with Ida White that saved a huge previously undisclosed part of my universe; watching the Pageant Committee work to hard; wondering if Ken Kerns is O. K.; the heartfelt moments with Len Kaplan when no one is looking.

While all the contestants stay on in memories and smiles, there's always someone special that never leaves. Everyone knows such a person and deals with the situation as best he or she can.

And so do I. You can't figure out why this person won't be in town later on. Dinner alone will really hurt. Nights will be especially long, lonely - and empty.

You see, the pageant's departure process is surgery of the mind. The hospital is the Hampton Inn, the surgeons are the pageant staff.

After the last car pulls out of the inn's parking lot I'll do the same thing that I have done for the last few years. It's like a ritual.

I'll go to my office and take a Gatorade® out of the fridge. Then I'll put my head down on my desk and I'll cry until the pain goes away - which it never does.

Never. I won't be alone. Len will probably be out in the foyer sitting on my visitor's couch doing the same weeping, the only difference being, he'll have a Diet Coke.

Love, quite simply, isn't supposed to hurt this much or for this long. It will never really go away, but maybe it will get better - 'Tomorrow,' if you know what I mean.

Next: The Roast:

One of the highlights, or low-lights, depending on how you look at it, is the annual roast of a celebrity. This year's roastee was Dr. Nicholas Fischer, Superintendent of Fall River Public Schools. Although he is a work-driven administrator he possesses another side that is riddled with



The Entire Entourage

humor and self-depreciation. He can take a joke, as well as give it out.

Although the pageant may take a year off from the roast in 2008, because of additional events planned for the 30th anniversary of the pageant, it will return to glory in the future.

This year's roast was an entertaining and fun success. The event was held at White's of Westport in the ballroom just two hours after the conclusion of the talent show at the Zeiterion Theatre in New Bedford.

came on as Batman with a surprisingly, well, gay, Robin by his side (Jerry).

Len Kaplan was the MC, Ed Lambert gave his farewell speech and song; and the Durfee Marching Band was a huge success.

Thanks go out to Durfee's Betty Yokel and Matt MacMullen and the kids for their efforts on the pageant's behalf.

Annette Gamache, Wayne Lima, Mark Harrison, Marion Gagnon, Bill Guilmette, Martin Costa's DJ Service, George Cataldo and others should be entered into some



At the Fall River Carousel are: Front row: Jeannie Schutte, Frances Christian, Brenda Sexton, Lynette Schlager, Donna Donlin, Elizabeth Fell; Rear: Mary Arceneaux-Wyche, Carol Touhey, Evelyn Quek, Jean Westrom, Ruth Gibson and Carolyn Sweet Smiley; Way in back on the left is Ida White.

Mike Moran bombed in his roast speech and Chuck Gregory (me) really bombed, much to the delight of many people (I lost my speech). It was a blast.

Donna Payer gave her best performance ever, as did Dave Kane, who scared us with his spelling of the word "aunt."

Bill Dapont as Capt. Nutrition was an instant hit, as was Rick Holden with his on-the-spot impersonation of Arnold Schwarzenegger. Ken Ormerod

Hall of Fame somewhere for their yeomen's work.

Rev. Dr. Robert Lawrence provided the inspirational prayer and a few chuckles.

Marion, Mark, Wayne, Jerry and Bill covered the Village People with 'YMCA' to perfection, while Nick dancing with a huge globe as Wayne sang, "He's Got The Whole World In His Hand," will go down as a comic icon.

A great job all around.



Tribune Photo

The Sr Sweetheart Planning Committee: seated: Jerry Gamache, Marion Gagnon, Len Kaplan; middle row: Yvette Mancini, Barbara Parente, Joyce Szlag; Rear: Mark Harrison, Anita Raposa and Bruce Rex. Annette Gamache and Geri McCrea are also members.

Next up:

The Pageant Finals:

The pageant is at the forefront of the annual social calendar of the Southcoast. Thousands attend either the talent show, the pageant finals or both events.

The pageant on-stage folks include Len Kaplan, Chuck Gregory, Wayne Miranda, Marion Gagnon and the ladies' escorts: Shawn Cadime, Walter Sawicki, Russ Guerriero and Steven Aguiar.

The stage talent included Miranda with a medley of favorites and Gregory ends the show with a God Bless America blast that shatters windows within two city

a-a-y different from all the others. Of course there are standards and criteria, no pageant could live without guidelines. Ours are different. No candidate is a coded number. Each person who signs on and her guest become family.

In life there are achievements,



Jewel Smalldon harmonizes with Len Kaplan and still Mayor Ed Lambert. It was Ed's last official act before retiring.

failures, you know, events that, perhaps, do go or don't go in a contestant's direction. The staff, committee, other contestants, past Queens and associates all share in those moments of glory, moments of loss, the joys of children and grandchildren marrying, going off to school or enjoying an adventure in life, a trip to Branson, Missouri, a trip to Philadelphia, to New York or a kid's successful role in a school play - we are all about family.



Rick Holden as Arnold Schwarzenegger, "The Governator," was as good a reason as any to never go to Callyfor-r-rnnn-knee-ah.

blocks. Musical accompaniment was provided by The Notables. All-in-all it is a great afternoon.

The talent and final shows are produced by Kathy Morris, with her daughter Jessie and associates.

The stage is dressed by Annette Gamache, Stephanie Melo-Tera and Dawn Estacio, sound a stage audio are by Mike Kalizs and Co.

The finalists of the 2007 pageant are a cross section of the world and ranks as one of the best fields ever, and there have been some really great winner-teams over the years.

Their group photo is on the front of this section, while an informal photo of the Queen and her guy appears on this page.

Carolyn Sweet Smiley, Rhode Island, took home "The Flaming Glow" Award. It is presented to the person who most impressed the contestants with her style grace and unpretentious way of communicating with people.

She is dancing with Lenny somewhere on this page. She was accompanied to the pageant by her amicable and caring husband, Dr. Harrison Smiley, who joyfully tended to her every need. It is nice to see two people this happy and this professional.

This pageant is different, wa-a-a-



Captain Nutrician

Now before we move on to the photo-blips we have to thank a lot of people: in no special order they are: the Fall River Council On Aging and Mayor William Whitty's office; the Catholic Memorial Home; the Sarah Brayton Rehabilitation Center; the Abbey Grille and the Grand Hall; the Crystal Springs Center; New Bedford Mayor Scott Lang and his Administrator Pauline Macedo; The



Nick gets friendly with the locals and the globe.

Zeiterion Theatre; the Landmark Assisted Living Rehabilitation Center; Stop & Shop and the Fall

THEY WON! THEY WON!



Carol Tuohy, this year's Queen, gets a huge hug from her number one supporter, her husband Marty. While Carol deserves all the accolades she can garner, Marty has the Pageant's - and The Southcoast Tribune's - thanks for his great personality and understanding of the aims and goals of all that surrounds him.

This is a great power couple.



Carolyn Sweet Smiley took home the Flaming Glow Award. Here she is dancing in the pageant finale with Len Kaplan.

River Chamber of Commerce and Industry for their luncheon at the Carousel at Battleship Cove; there was a fun Chinese luncheon with all food provided by the 'Oriental Chow Mein Company' of Fall River.

If you need noodles, call Len or Chuck, the bags are in the mail.

The entourage also dined at the Peking Garden, the American Buffet, a family dinner was served by the pageant committee and, later in the week, a soup and salad luncheon held

Right: Steve Aguiar, Chairman of the Board; Chuck Gregory, Vice President; Marion Gagnon Administrative Assistant; Len Kaplan Pageant President.

See you all next year.

at the Hampton Inn was provided for by Mr. Kaplan, Mr. Gregory and Holly Souza and Candice Pacheco of Giga Bite Grille in beautiful downtown Fall River.

At the dress rehearsal on the Friday night, all the pizza was provided by Mark Allard's Domino's Pizza and served by the pageant committee.

Thanks to BankFive, St. Anne's Credit Union, Fall River Municipal Credit Union, the First Congregational Church, WebsterBank, Fernando Garcia at Fall River Ford, Anita Raposa, Karam Financial Services and Borden Remington

All accommodations, meeting rooms, community rooms and sub-offices were at the Lafrance Hospitality complex of White's of Westport and the Hampton Inn. The service and respect from the staff was perfect.

The photos here are mostly from the person who deserves every award in the world - photographer, Bruce Rex.

2008 will be the 30th anniversary of a project that no one ever thought would go beyond the borders of Fall River, Somerset and Swansea. It has become a world class achievement that is wholly run by dedicated volunteers. It is a premier event not just around the Massachusetts Southcoast, but the world, including the Cayman Islands, Philippines, the Virgin Islands and Singapore.

The staff thanks Mayors Edward Lambert, William Whitty and Scott Lang for their support. The planning committee looks forward to working with Mayor-Elect State Representative Robert Correia in 2008 and beyond.

The pageant committee would like to thank The Southcoast Tribune, The Herald News, Channel 12, World News Service, Fall River Cable Access Ch. 95; New Bedford Cable Access, Ch. 98; Frank Wing of www.wingstv.com, Phil Sabatino of COMCAST, Hec, Mike, Barry and Keri at WSAR and also WHTB for the publicity. Thanks also goes out to our hundreds of sponsors and to Martin Costa and Bill Guilmette.

George Cataldo was missed this year, but will return to sing in '08.

Thanks also go out to the pageant judges Attorney John Mitchell, Attorney Rene Brown, Tom Quinn, Rick Holden, Holly Bronhard, Michelle Pelletier-Colberg, Eileen Faxon and Miss Massachusetts 2006 Michaela Gagne. Mr. Gregory, Vice President of the Corporation, was the Judge Chairman, Tita Tanquay was the auditor.

If you would like a pageant package just call Len Kaplan at 508-675-0249 or go to the web page.

Bear with me as I continue to show you "The Ms Senior Sweetheart Pageant" from my heart. You may turn the page now.....



File Photo

...From the preceding page:

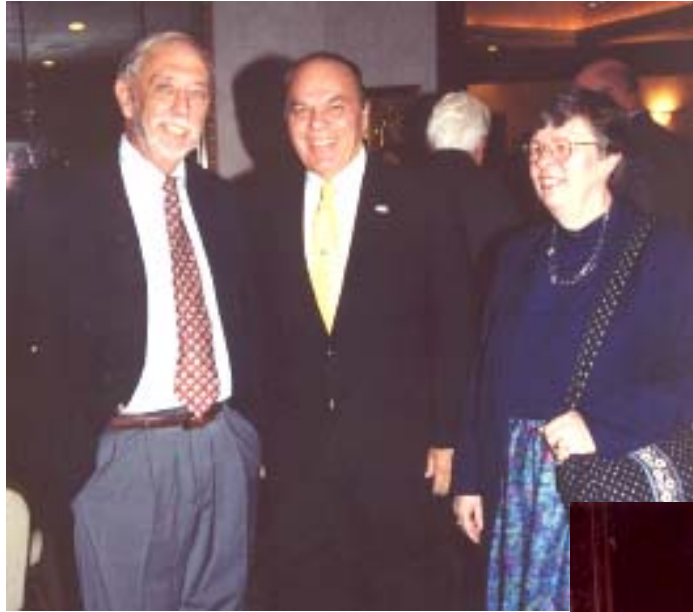


Jean Westrom's grace and style under one of the most debilitating of life's challenges at 73, puts her on a platform that we can only look up at and admire. She and her husband Jim are battling a life crisis that demands devotion, love and persistence.



All Photos by Bruce Rex

L-R: Front row: Evelyn Quek, Mary Arceneaux-Wyche, Tony Hunt, and Ida White; Rear: Roland Birch, Marie Briere and Frances Christian. To the real rear on the right side is Jean Westrom's husband, Jim.



Above, right: Beauty and understanding come with passion and a vast understanding of life.

One of the great joys of being involved with the Ms Senior Sweetheart Pageant is meeting new people. They don't come any better than Jeanne Schutte from Michigan.

She is spending the winter months at her home in Florida and is a sure bet to be back in 2008.

Left: Middle: State Representative and Mayor-Elect (although he wasn't at the time the photo was taken) Bob Correia discusses the roast's agenda with then City Council candidate Gus and Pat Suneson.

Gus and Pat have been stalwarts throughout the years fighting injustices and being on the side of assisting others in their time of need. Gus recently stepped down from his popular cable access television program, "The Gus Suneson Show," to up his battle against cancer to a higher level. Our hearts go out to one of Fall River's favorite sons in his fight to survive.



Oh, stop leaning..... It just doesn't get any better than this, Chuck Gregory and Tamara Thatcher-Swihart at ease with the world.



Above: Fall River Mayor William Whitty entertains the first Ms Senior Sweetheart Pageant Winner Anita Rapoza and the 2006 pageant winner Jacquelyn J. Van Meter.

Right: Attleboro's Mary Lee Pompeii displays her charm that has endured over years of competition.



Above: God Bless America gets the Royal treatment from soloist: Chuck Gregory, with help from, L-R: Barbara Parente, Tamara Thatcher-Swihart, Wayne Miranda, Evelyn Quek and Jerry Gamache.

Right: Reality is that women exude sensual images and rollicking feelings of good times and no one exudes that more than popular contestant Ruth Gibson.

A verbally challenged linqusitic phenomena, she is after all English, with "the accent". This wonderful woman displays everything that the Ms Senior Sweetheart Pageant extols: beauty, fun, humor, personality and class.

For that she takes home the trophy time and time again.

