Pretty in Pink

Scrapbooks and photo albums: For all the painful and challenging times, I have just as many awesome memories captured for easy reference.

April 3, 2020 By Megan-Claire Chase

With so much uncertainty and emotions running high, I decided to focus this week's blog post to a happy time from the past. That's why I love my scrapbooks and photo albums. For all the painful and challenging times, I have just as many awesome memories captured for easy reference.

REWIND: Let me take you back to my senior year of high school in 1995. Anyone from Macon, GA and surrounding areas know all about the annual Cherry Blossom Festival that happens in March. It's an international festival of friendship, plus the cherry blossom trees are in full bloom. For me, it was always a favorite time of year because everything cherry blossom related is PINK, my favorite color.

Though I grew up watching pageants, I never thought I would actually be in one. My high school, Mount de Sales Academy, always had at least 1-2 seniors on the Cherry Blossom Court every year. I had never thought of entering the Cherry Blossom Pageant until a friend from another high school suggested it. Her name was Ann, and she was a 1994 Cherry Blossom Princess from Central High School. We were in a musical together back then during her reign. She thought I would be perfect for it.

Considering pink has been my favorite color since I was four years old, I thought it would be fun to enter the pageant and be immersed in everything pink, meet more new people and practice my interviewing skills for college. For this pageant, the talent was giving a speech on a topic of your choice. I have always loved the stage, so thought it would be an absolute blast.

My friend Anne was so convinced I would get on the court that after she left for college, she had her mom reach out to give me her pink pageant gown, pink interview suit and pink poodle skirt. We happened to be the exact same height and size. I was a tiny little thing back in the day.

In the two weeks leading up to the pageant, my mother got very ill and nearly died. She got a staph infection and pneumonia and was hospitalized. I did not realize how serious all this was at the time. My youth group leaders and mother's friends stepped in and made sure I had everything I needed, got to school and all to all the pageant rehearsals. This was the start of mother's body notifying her something was seriously wrong.

As excited as I was on the day of the pageant, I was deeply sad because my mother wouldn't be

there. She had never missed a major performance of mine. I remember getting ready in the dressing room at the Grand Opera House in downtown Macon when one of the volunteers walked over with a message. My mother was there. She had signed herself out of the hospital against her doctor's orders and had a nurse with her. The Cherry Blossom Committee had roped off a section in the back, so no one was seated near her. Once I knew my mother was in the audience, I felt even more confident and wanted to do my utmost best.

From the moment the pageant started, I was on fire! My smile had never been so big. When I was on stage during the opening dance number, I searched the audience and found where mother was sitting with a facemask and nurse by her side with her IV. Knowing she was so sick but determined not to miss my first time in a pageant meant the world to me. She was diagnosed with a blood cancer called essential thrombocythemia at that time. She didn't tell me until the summer before my junior year of college.

Princess Megan-Claire (ME)

The Cherry Blossom Court consists of one queen and four princesses. So, when I made the top 10 and then ultimately the top five, and then crowned as one of the 1995 Cherry Blossom Princesses, I could not have been prouder of myself. I had always wanted to be a debutante like my mother. I felt like one that night and at the night of the Cherry Blossom Ball.

From left to right: Princess Joy, Princess Megan-Claire (ME), Queen Keisha, Princess Laura and Princess Jennifer

From left to right: Queen Keisha, Princess Joy, Princess Megan-Claire (ME), Princess Jennifer and Princess Laura

I got to do some amazing things while on the Court. I got to be part of ribbon cuttings, a motivational speaker to young girls, thrilling helicopter ride over the city, meet dignitaries from all over the world, and a judge for the Little Miss Cherry Blossom Pageant. The highlight of the entire experience aside from being on the Court was meeting the Band of the Welsh Guards of England. In fact, I kept in touch with one for a few months afterward. I still have the letter! They were super nice, flirty and hilarious. I was never popular with boys in high school, so it was nice to get some attention from some cuties but all in good fun.

From left to right: Princess Megan-Claire, Welsh Guard #1 and #2, Princess Jennifer

Princess Megan-Claire (ME) just hanging out with the Band of the Welsh Guards

My cherry blossom tiara is one of my most prized possession because of all the amazing and fun memories attached to it. The entire experience was one of the highlights of my senior year in high school.

So, as we move into another week of uncertainty due to COVID-19, those still in treatment or newly diagnosed, make sure to take time and focus on some of the good things in your life, whether past or present.

Until next time,

Warrior Megsie

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