

Vancouver woman headed for Miss America pageant

Jacquie Brown's mother lives in Yacolt

Marvin Case
Publisher Emeritus

Jacquie Brown, who attended eight schools in nine years in the Vancouver and Evergreen school districts, will compete for the coveted title of Miss America Sat., Jan. 15, in a program televised from Las Vegas, NV.

Brown, who won the title of Miss Greater Vancouver in an October 2009 pageant, makes no secret of the instability that complicated her teen years. In fact, it's an important part of her quest for Miss America celebrity.

Brown, 22, is the daughter of Judy Ford who now lives in Yacolt. She only met her biological father, Richard Heine, earlier this year even though he lives in Vancouver. Brown says she was the product of a "one night stand" when her mother was 18 years old. Her father was never part of her life.

Shortly after Brown was born, her mother met David Jacobus and the two were together until splitting up in 1996. Even though Judy and David never married, they had a son together. Brown calls David Jacobus "Dad."

At age 16, Brown moved out



MISS WASHINGTON JACQUIE BROWN will compete for the coveted title of Miss America Sat., Jan. 15 in a program televised from Las Vegas, NV. Brown won the title of Miss Greater Vancouver in an October 2009 pageant. She is the only daughter of Judy Ford, who now lives in Yacolt.

of her mother's home and has been on her own ever since. She got roommates and an apartment and worked as a waitress to pay her bills while continuing in high school. Work cut into her high school activities, but she managed to appear in school musicals. And she was in the honors program. She graduated from Evergreen High School in 2007.

Brown then took a year away from education and worked to save money. In addition to waitressing, she worked as an extra in movies filmed in Portland. While she does not appear in the movie "Management" starring Jennifer Aniston, her car is shown in the film. And she got paid.

Brown then started Clark College while continuing to work. Brown also became interested in pageants.

In 2007, she entered the Miss Clark County/Miss Greater Vancouver pageant, the stepping-stone to Miss Washington and Miss America, and came in as third runner-up. She was also named Miss Congeniality in that program.

As a runner-up, Brown qualified for another pageant called the "sweeper" program where

Miss America

Continued from page A1

runners-up from around Washington compete in a statewide pageant held in Puyallup. She didn't win that pageant either but "I learned a lot," said Brown.

Brown again competed in the Miss Clark County pageant in 2008 and finished as second runner-up. She again competed in the sweeper program.

Brown has personal platform

Brown used her unstable youth and family experiences as her pageant platform. Her platform goal focused on helping young people who had similar experiences to her own.

Brown said she started mentoring other youths when she was just 16, trying to help others who faced the same difficulties she had. She had volunteered at her church, Summit View Church, to help other young people.

After falling just short in two Miss Clark County pageants, Brown analyzed her efforts and believes she then figured out what she needed to do to win.

While her platform didn't change and she still talked about mentoring young people, she did it in a different way.

"I realized it was all my attitude," said Brown. "I was kind of scared to share my story. I didn't tell my own experiences. I thought the others came from good, supportive families."

Brown concluded that she was just not someone – an authority figure – standing there, telling young people how to live their lives. She could speak from experience about goal setting and working to achieve a better life.

In October 2009, Brown again competed in the Miss Clark County/Miss Greater Vancouver pageant and this time she won. The pageant actually had

two winners and Brown earned the title of Miss Greater Vancouver.

Then in July 2010 she competed in the Miss Washington pageant, and won again. With that title came \$11,500 in scholarship money and, of course, the road to the Miss America event which will be televised on ABC. The 90th annual Miss America pageant will feature 53 young women from all 50 states, Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico.

To prepare for the Miss America pageant, Brown moved to the Seattle area where she lives with state pageant organizers Mike and Peggy Miller and makes numerous appearances in the Seattle area. She is the first Miss Washington title-holder to be required to move to Seattle.

The Miss America pageant includes competition in talent, evening gown, on-stage questions, interview and swim suit. Brown's preparation includes practicing for the questions and interview portions of the program with mock interviews and practice questions. She studies to stay abreast of national and world issues that might come up in the program.

"The interview is not easy," said Brown. "It's really difficult. There are no fluffy questions. They will ask about current events and hot button issues."

Brown will sing in the talent competition. In addition to high school musicals, Brown sang in two school choirs and a worship team in church. While she has no formal voice training, she toys with the idea of pursuing a singing career. "It's something I love to do," she said.

Brown needed to save money leading up to the pageant, although most of her expenses are paid. She traveled to Orlando, FL – only the second airplane trip of her life – to purchase her pageant wardrobe, which consists of an evening gown, talent ensemble, interview dress and more.

If she wins the title of Miss America, she will "live out of a suitcase" for a year, traveling some 20,000 miles a month. She will be paid a salary. The title also carries some \$50,000 in scholarship money along with opportunities.

Brown has set her sights on a career in communications or broadcasting, but has not ruled out trying her hand at singing professionally.

Her advice to young people? "Think positively with positive affirmation. Trust in your abilities. You can accomplish goals if you want them bad enough."

Brown believes she can help young people. "They can hear from someone not that much older than they are. They can find it within themselves. They can set goals, smaller goals leading to larger goals."

"I didn't choose how I grew up," Brown said.

"I am devoted to youth mentoring," said Brown. "I would not be where I am today were it not for the people who gave of their time to mentor me. I have the responsibility to devote myself to ensuring that children know they can overcome the most immense obstacles. I mentor because of my childhood and I try to inspire them to believe in themselves and that there is hope.

"My passion is filling children's lives with kindness, friendship and unending support. I feel blessed to be a part of children's lives and to witness their growth."

Brown believes that positive role models provide guidance and tools to change lives. "It is important to encourage the youth in our community to be confident, make healthy choices and pursue their ambitions," she said.

In addition to her mother, father and step-father, Brown has other relatives living in Clark County, including grandmother Barbara Brown of Vancouver, uncle and aunt Becky and Robert Turner of Vancouver, and great-uncle and great-aunt Byron and Lin Jacobus, also of Vancouver.

Vancouver resident Lois Elaine Smith-Zoll serves as Scholarship Development Director for the Miss Washington organization. She has been with the Miss Washington and Miss America organization for 45 years.

Marvin Case may be reached at 687-4122 and marvincase@msn.com.