

Fairfield County Beauty Captures Titles, Headlines

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 WINNSBORO, Dec. 25 — South Carolina's Miriam Stevenson, a girl who grew up on home-made buttermilk, brought international recognition to herself and her home state this year as she captured the titles of Miss United States and Miss Universe.

Her meteoric rise from lesser beauty thrones to that of the "Most Beautiful Girl in the World" fashioned one of the state's top news stories of 1954.

The 21-year-old Lander College senior from Winnsboro brought joy and swelling pride to many South Carolinians as she scored her twin victory in Long Beach, Calif. The third annual Miss Universe Pageant was climaxed with her crowning as Miss Universe last July 23.

Folly Rankin Suber, 19, University of South Carolina coed and cheer leader from Whitmire, added to the Palmetto State's treasure chest of beauty laurels September 11 as she placed third in the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City, N. J.

When Miss Suber won swim suit honors early in the competition, it looked like South Carolina might cop both outstanding beauty pageants.

Miss Stevenson, who succeeded Miss Armi Kuusela of Finland and Miss Christine Martel of France, winners of the Miss Universe pageants of 1952 and 1953 respectively, was born on a farm eight miles from Winnsboro on January 4, 1933.

Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Leonard O. Stevenson, still live there. Besides his three daughters — Miriam's other two sisters are married — Mr. Stevenson's pride and joy is his herd of purebred Guernsey cattle.

MIRIAM'S BEAUTY secret—her father believes—is a simple health cocktail indigenous to the farm—good cold buttermilk. And this may have been the secret of the peaches-and-cream complexion, the sparkling blue eyes and the supple 36-24-36 figure which won the votes of judges at Long Beach.

While attending Lander College as a junior last year, Miriam entered the Miss America contest via the Miss Greenwood contest. She won over all competition, was crowned Miss Greenwood in the Miss America Contest and went on to win the state title of Miss South Carolina 1953.

She carried those colors into the Miss American Pageant at Atlantic City in 1953 and was among the first 10 place winners.

UPON ENTERING the Miss Universe Pageant this year, she won the right to again represent Greenwood in the state finals at Union.

Among her many beauty titles is that of Lander College Queen.

During her brief stay at Universal-International Studios in California following her triumphs and winning of a \$250-per-week motion picture contract, Miriam attended daily classes in a studio talent school.

Her training program included lessons in diction, dramatics, horseback riding, dancing and singing. She also appeared in a technicolor musical featurette titled "A World of Beauty," along with 14 other Miss Universe contestants of 1954.

But the glamour and excitement was not enough to hold Miriam. At least, not at this time. She decided to return to Greenwood and Lander College and complete her senior year.

SHE HAS an option until July of next year under which she could return to her movie contract with U-I should she decide to do so.

Recently, the statuesque beauty said she might soon become a resident of Columbia and mentioned a career in dress designing as a possible goal.

Roads leading to a number of careers are open to Miriam Stevenson. Will it be motion picture acting, dress designing or housewife?

Come what may, the modest Miriam endeared herself to all who came to know her in her sensational rise to fame.

While disasters, world tension and turmoil will make many of 1954's top news stories, the story of Miriam Stevenson was a happy one for all concerned.

SC's Miriam Stevenson Makes News as Miss Universe



Miss Stevenson of Winnsboro brought international beauty laurels to South Carolina after she was declared Miss Universe of 1955 at the Long Beach, Cal., pageant. Her victory over beauties from 47 other states won her the title of Miss United States. Then, in competition with 32 foreign beauties, she again emerged the winner as Miss Universe. Above, she is shown with her two trophies. During a homecoming celebration at Winnsboro, Governor Byrnes exacted a kiss as the price for pouring beautiful Miriam a cold glass of water.