

The Miss Deaf Utah Story

written in 1983

The National Association of the Deaf initiated the Miss Deaf America Pageant in 1972 with the dual purpose of providing young, talented deaf women the opportunity to assume leadership roles in the society of the Deaf, and of conveying Deaf Awareness to the public in the representative winner of the pageant. In 1978, with those purposes in mind, Utah Association for the Deaf President David Mortensen appointed Adele Sigoda as chairperson and got the 1979 Miss Deaf Utah Pageant committee going. Adele assumed the position of director for the 1981 pageant, with Louise Wilkins as chairperson.

At the appreciation dinner in 1981, Adele announced her resignation so that she could spend time with her new family. So, by election, Shirley Snow and Barbara Bass became state director and chairperson, respectively.

At the 1979 committee meeting, David Mortensen broached the idea of sponsors for the contestants. The committee was not receptive to the idea, citing problems of putting the girls and organizations together. This idea was revived this year (1983) and given its chance. It has succeeded to a moderate degree, as each girl has a sponsor, one way or another. Sponsors are heartily recommended because they give the girls morale support, advice, and ideas which they could never have otherwise on their own.

From the beginning, the committee meetings were held in unlikely places, such as the Salt Lake County council chamber, the conference rooms of St. Benedict's Hospital in Ogden, and Copper Mountain Mental Health Center in Murray. Now the committee meets regularly at the Center for the Deaf in Bountiful.

Through the first two pageants, most contestants were in their early twenties and currently college students. This time most girls are younger and just graduated from high school and also most acquired deafness from the rubella epidemic.

All proceeds incurred by the Miss Deaf Utah Pageant and MDUP fund-raisers will help pay for all expenses for Miss Deaf Utah, her chaperone and scholarship fund.