

# Miss. Teen Halton/Miss. Halton 2005

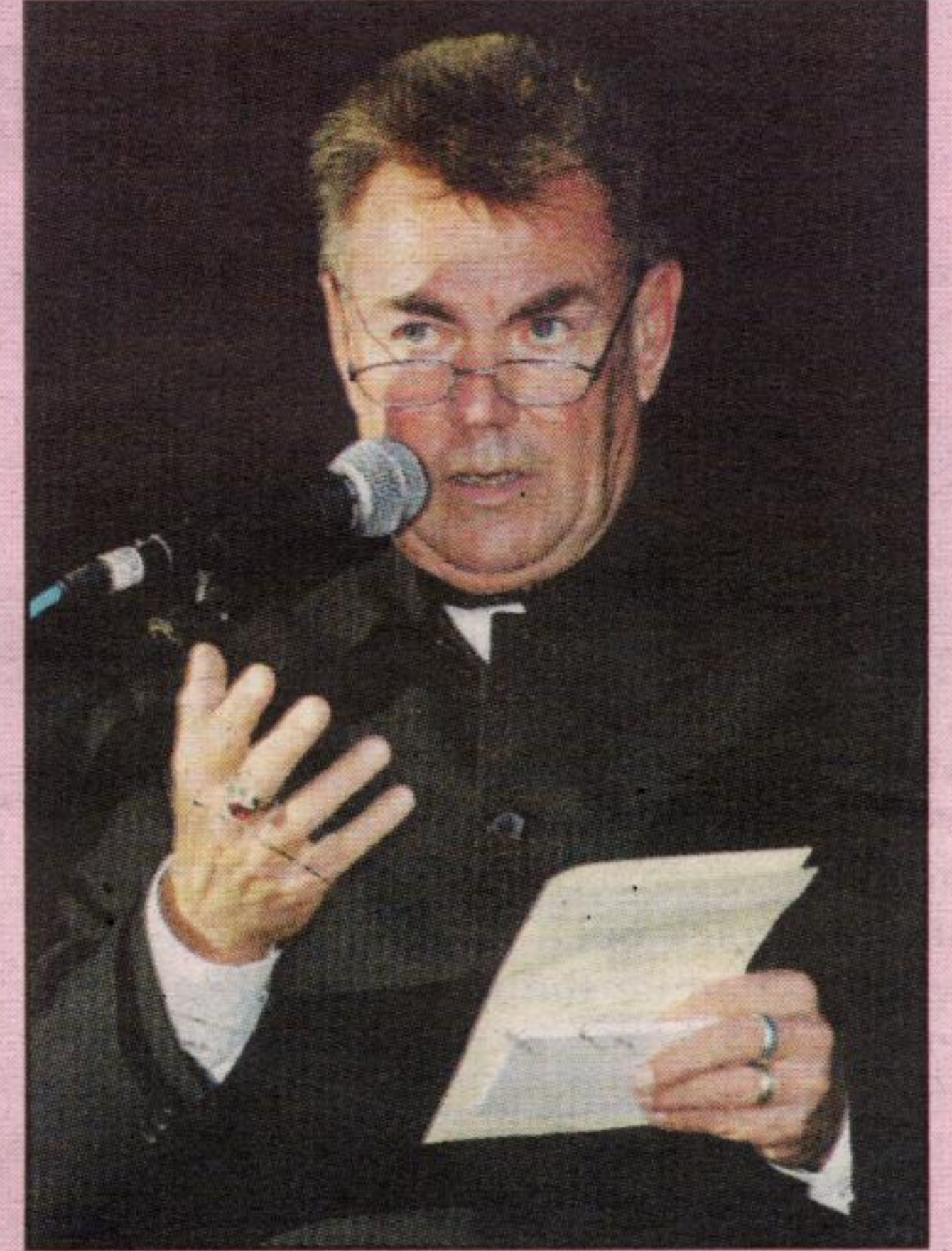
PHOTOS BY PETER C. MCCUSKER



Miss Teen Halton contestants, back row (l-r) Krysta Mendonca, Andrea Djolovic, Cassidy Matetich, Erica Agnes, Nicki Mendonca, Michelle Kervanka, Adriana Maroleanu. Front row (l-r) Brianna Duff, Elizabeth Kiy, Dayne Lavis, Chelsey Bouchey and Miss Canada Scholarship Megan Punnett.



Miss Teen Halton 2005 Chelsey Bouchey



Master of Ceremonies, Bill McKeown

## Move over Miss Congeniality!

Compass reporter Ann Kornuta goes undercover at the Miss Halton Beauty Pageant.

In the 80's when I was a kid, I would flip through the channels on my TV set and catch glimpses of the pageants on American stations. The image of phoney plastic magazine smiles and huge puffy 80's hair in gleaming sequenced dresses moulded my thinking at an early age that pageants are about appearance. There was also the whole "talent" thing. Contestants had to perform for a crowd, generally a dance or song routine that I would sleep through. Women and girls today aspire to be more than mere objects.

Picking up the application form, I noticed I did not have to waltz out in heels and a bikini throwing back flips for applause. All I had to do was show up in a nice dress and write down what charity I believed in. Wait a minute. This "beauty pageant" is all about who I am and what I think? My interest bubbled and I started pawing through my closet for that evening gown and shook out the mothballs.

The pageant was broken into two competitions, one for Miss Teen Halton and Miss Halton, but both groups shared the same back room. It was my chance to get a feel of what it is like to be one of these youngsters in party dresses before their moment of walking out on stage and into the spotlight. "Do you like my dress?" one of the more confident contestants in Miss Halton asks the group. "I made it myself and paid only \$6.98 a yard at Fabric Land. The girls watched her with a nervous silence I felt slice the room. For some, it was their first time walking out onto a stage let alone being in this kind of competition. Melissa, one of the girls in the Miss Halton Pageant, looked down at her dress, a denim cocktail dress and made an awkward face. "I had my graduation dress, but I didn't know if it was right for this event or not, so I just grabbed what I had in my closet," she says, looking at the other young girls in ball gowns and fancy dresses.

Most of these girls were meeting for the first time. Besides a short awkwardness at the beginning, the chatter and talk started up and everyone was focusing on the difficult task of answering the proposed questions for the night. One question was "which person inspired me the most" and each girl was talking about the person who motivated her. I was glad to see that every girl there was thanking a member in their family or a special friend who had great challenges in their life, a disability or an illness. At least girls

today are finding heroes closer to home than on the big screen.

Ten minutes to go and I take a scan of the room. Everyone is nervously tugging at their dresses, sitting crossed armed or reapplying lip-gloss and my eye catches Melissa, the girl in the cocktail dress, looking crestfallen. I walk up to her and ask her if she is ready to go on and if the pressure is too much for her. She looks up at me and frowns. "I wish I had another dress," she says and puts her head in her arms. "Everyone else has such a lovely dress and I just have this thing." I look away for a minute, then back to her. "You want to borrow a dress I have back at my apartment? We have 15 minutes before stage time- if you want, we can go grab it." Melissa eyes me to see if I was joking and I wink back at her. As the band strikes up to play, we dash past the crowd of people in the audience and out the back doors to the parking lot laughing.

We roar out of Hot Rod's parking lot in her car and Melissa and I talk. "Some of them are taking this all too seriously and we are all just nervous, but it's just meant to be fun and I think after we all just relax and laugh a bit, it won't seem too nerve-racking," Melissa says as she drives.

When we get back, the mood has changed slightly and we all tell jokes, learning who does what, who goes to which school, who is into sports, who is into music and who has a crush on the guitarist of the rock band performing that night. After all, these are just ordinary girls in party dresses. Miss Canada comes backstage to join in with the joke telling and fun. Each girl gazes in awe at her huge 'diamond' tiara.

It is all over and I am in the bathroom tugging off my dress and pulling back on my jeans and T-shirt. I did not win, but I knew that from the beginning that I wasn't allowed to as the Halton Compass is the presenter of the event. Still, there is a feeling of loss inside of me that I cannot shrug off. I can only imagine what some of the other girls might be feeling at losing the competition. As I get out of the stall and walk out with my dress on my shoulder, a woman in black is washing her hands and smiles at me. "I thought you were a sure win when I saw you out on stage," she says. I just smile and nod politely. "You know, with the right coaching, you could go on to better things"

I think for a moment in my head. As long as better things mean sticking to my integrity and to never stop learning then I guess I will. I walk out into the cool October night with my dress over my shoulder and from out of the darkness I hear a familiar voice callout after me. "ANN! THANKYOU!" it is Melissa running up to me with my dress. "Thank you for everything!" She hands me my dress and I watch her disappear in her car waving ecstatically as I drive away. Melissa did not win, even with my borrowed dress, but she had a great time so I guess that is what really counted.

The Miss Halton pageant was strange, but fun at the same time. Once we got over the 'beauty' pageant concept, we all had a good time and enjoyed the evening. It was not a battle over who had the best hair, makeup or dress. It was more of a test of confidence and character. I felt like the biggest winner though by the end of the night. I did not walk away with roses or a diamond tiara, but I walked away with the best prize of all and



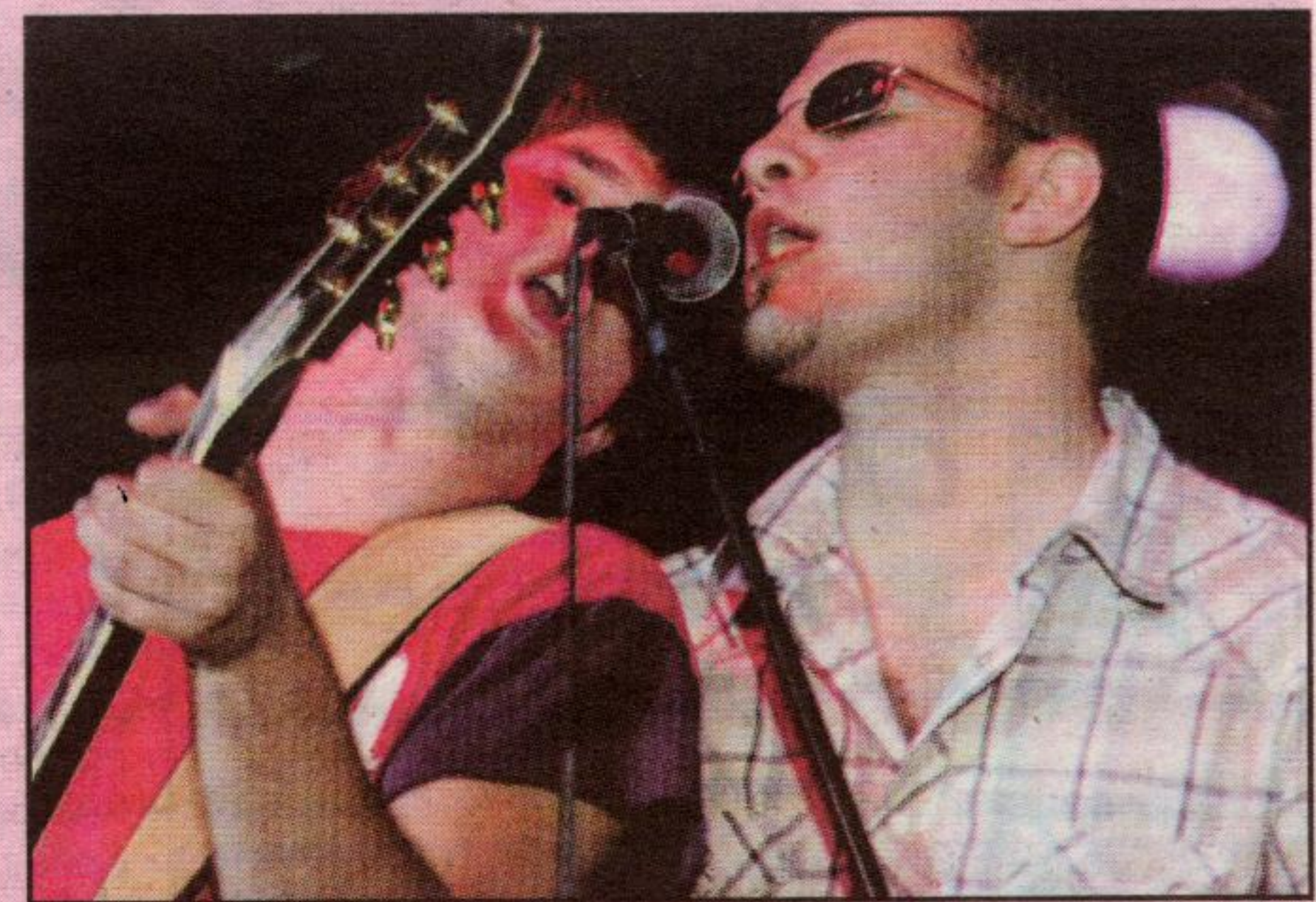
Miss Canada Scholarship Megan Punnett crowns Miss Halton 2005, Serena Purdy



Miss Halton 2005, Serena Purdy



Miss Halton contestants (l to r) Ann Kornuta, Melissa Campbell, Serena Purdy, Nikki Raddie and Shannan Bouchey.



Jonathan Volpe & Steven Demetrious, entertained the crowd along with their classic rock group L.T.D.