

Copeland set to compete at Miss Galaxy pageant

Dance shop owner excited to represent Canada at event

By DENNIS SMITH

Special to The Champion

Ronda Copeland performed on dance teams before thousands of football fans in the past and now looks forward to impressing Miss Galaxy International judges.

The Burlington resident and owner/operator of the Ronda Copeland School of Dance in Milton was crowned Miss Canada Galaxy in Toronto recently.

She was chosen through an application process from 25 to 30 contenders.

The selection was made just before Valentine's Day. "We decided that we were going to make Friday the 13th good luck," Ms Copeland joked.

Ms Copeland met Miss Canada Galaxy director Susan Balcolm previously when she represented Toronto at the Miss Canada International Pageant in 1998. Ms Balcolm served as her chaperone then.

Ms Copeland will represent Canada as one of 75 contestants in the Miss Galaxy International Pageant in Ohio in June.

"I think there's a resurgence in interest and support of pageants in Canada," she said. "They support and encourage women. Pageants celebrate women's achievements and individuality. Pageantry is a valuable tool for self-esteem."

The upcoming pageant will feature mainly American contestants, although there'll also be entries from Sri Lanka and Sweden.

The event will include an interview, plus evening gown, fashion and swimsuit competitions.

Pageants and particularly swimsuit events have been criticized for being sexist, but Ms Copeland disagrees.

"I think in today's society, people are interested in being healthy and physically fit," she said. "In most pageants, the swimsuit events focus on a healthy physique. It's not the stereotype of old. You just have to be physically fit."

Well versed in performing

Ms Copeland is experienced in choreography and dancing. She has run the Ronda Copeland School of Dance for several years and has been involved in numerous shows.

She was previously a Sunshine Girl and performed in two Grey Cup games as a Toronto Argonauts cheerleader from 1996 to 1997.

She particularly remembers the first championship football game, held in a snowstorm at Hamilton's Ivor Wynne stadium.

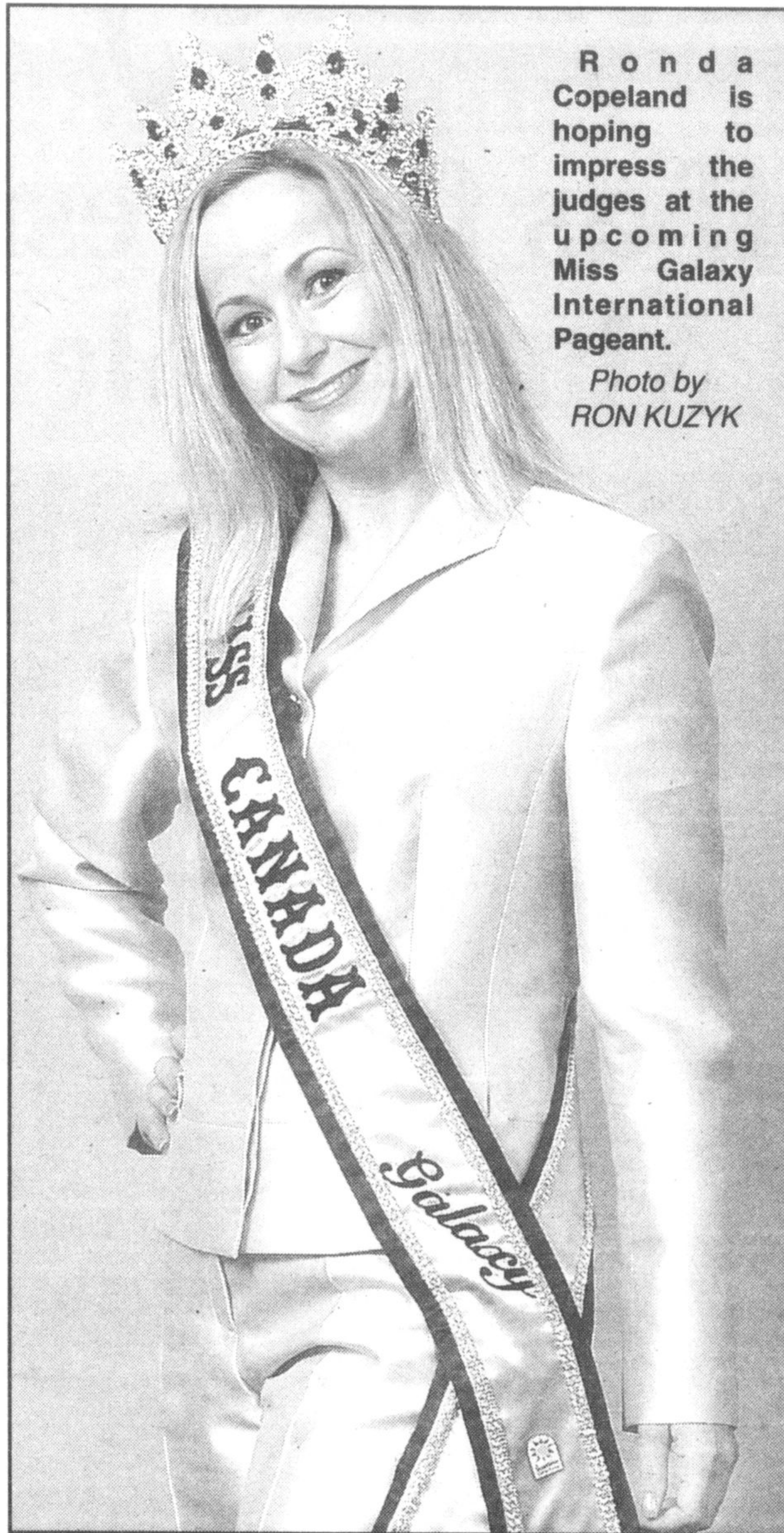
"There was a bit of slipping and sliding," recalled Ms Copeland. "We were sent out in sweatshirts. When you're moving and dancing and active, you don't feel the cold."

She was also a dance team captain with the Buffalo Bills from 1999 to 2001.

"It was incredible. The NFL is an American institution," said Ms Copeland.

"There were 80,000 screaming fans at the games."

She also fondly recalled performing for victims of the 1998 ice storms in a benefit show that included actor Gordon Pinsent and singer Susan Aglukark.



Ronda Copeland is hoping to impress the judges at the upcoming Miss Galaxy International Pageant.

Photo by RON KUZYK

CDs being accepted for upcoming book sale

For the first time, Milton's Canadian Federation of University Women is accepting CDs, videos and audio tapes as well as books for its 31st annual book sale.

Donations can be dropped off at Zellers at Milton Mall (Ontario Street entrance), Milton Public Library and at the designated bin near the Milton Mall

food court.

Proceeds will go toward scholarships. The sale will take place March 26 from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. and March 27 from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Children's and teens' books will cost 50 cents each. Those that aren't sold will be donated to the lieutenant-governor's program for children.



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