

Chronicle Profile

Jones Is Just A 'Down-Home Girl'

By AUDREY L. WILLIAMS
Staff Writer

In August 1971, Davida Jones was the most envied 13-year-old girl in her hometown of Savannah, Ga.

Unlike many admiring fans who seek the gratification of an autograph or a lock of hair, Jones took a different approach and decided she wanted to interview her bigger-than-life teen idols, the Jackson Five -- and she did, which made most of the other little girls in her town jealous.

"I got the bug at thirteen," says Jones. "It started out as a gimmick between me and my girlfriend, who wanted to interview the Osmonds. I wrote a letter to the *Savannah Morning News* saying I wanted to interview the Jackson Five from a fan's point of view. They bought the idea immediately."

So when the famed brothers came to town for a concert, Jones says she armed herself with pen and pad, as well as her albums for the "usual autographs," and had her first story published in a daily newspaper at 13 years old.

The motivation Jones showed 12 years ago launched her career as a broadcast journalist. Today, she is one of the most respected TV journalists in the Triad as WFMY-TV's Winston-Salem beat reporter.

However, Jones' coverage of Winston-Salem is relatively new. She is more often identified as Channel 2's "Nightside" reporter, the beat she covered for a year and a half.

"People identify me with the snow and all the elements," says Jones as she takes a minute to laugh at some of her experiences. "You wouldn't believe how bent out of shape people get when they would see me in flood water or walking on ice."

"They see me at Burger King and all the normal places," she says. "The older women look at me like a daughter, while the younger ones look at me like a sister, and they really feel for me out there in the cold."

"I get more calls in the winter because people can't stand to see me out in the air," Jones says. "But once people in the Triad accept you,

"I'm just an everyday, down-home girl from Savannah, Ga., who's trying to sell ability, not appearance."

-- Davida Jones

they care about you because they consider me as the girl next door."

Growing up in Savannah and reared by caring parents who chided her with love and encouragement, Jones was the kid on the block who usually did what others only dreamed of doing.

She was the first black editor-in-chief at Windsor High School, the first black student government president, the first black sophomore class president and one of the first black cheerleaders at the school.

"I pushed for these things," Jones says. "I

was motivated by people who said I couldn't have them."

After high school, a determined Jones entered the University of Georgia in Athens, where she majored in broadcast news. And again, Jones knocked down barriers.

"I did my internship in Atlanta for public television as a legislative reporter," she says. "You really had to be respected by the professors to get that internship, but by that time I was used to being first."

Like many college graduates with a degree in a not-so-sound profession, Jones says she was worried about her future, which she says looked bleak for a tearful six weeks until she landed a job in Birmingham, Ala.

"Believe me, there was nothing but hard news in Birmingham and it was indeed a baptism by the wolves," Jones says. "I had to learn how to be aggressive the first day, and because it was such a large and vicious market, I didn't (have time to) get a strong writing background."

But Jones, 25, says she's thankful to Channel 2 and anchorman Bill Kopald for helping her smooth her rough spots.

"I consider Kopald, Rick Amme and Denise Franklin real journalists, despite what some people may say about them just being there to look good," says Jones. "Kopald really helped me, and for some reason, I can take a lot of criticism from him."

"Unfortunately, there are a lot of people on



Davida Jones: She's always doing what others dream of (photo by James Parker).



Airman 1st Class Byron C. Penn

Penn Is Awarded

Airman First Class Byron C. Penn distinguished himself by meritorious service in Publications and Forms Distribution Clerk, Base Administration, 8th Tactical Fighter Wing, Kunson Air Base, Republic of Korea, from June 16, 1982 to June 10, 1983.

During this period, Airman Penn's superior professional skill, job knowledge and dedication contributed in providing outstanding publishing and requisitioning and distribution support to all units and to the training effectiveness and ultimate success of the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing.

The distinctive accomplishments of Airman Penn reflect credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Airman Penn is the son of Mrs. Annie Mickle Penn of Winston-Salem and the late Harold Penn Sr.

He is presently serving at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Calif.

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Force are Marcella Oglesby, Clifton Graves, Florence Corpening, Johnetta Huntley, Rhonda Covington, Dr. Myrna Williams, Earline Parmon, Willard Coker and Curtis Canty.

For ticket information call 725-2090, 727-8100 or 722-0918.

Miss North Carolina Teen Pageant Rescheduled

The 1984 Miss North Carolina Teen USA Pageant, previously scheduled for this month, will be held the same weekend as the Miss North Carolina USA Pageant on January 14 and 15 at the Winston-Salem Hilton.

Due to the conflicts of scheduling a pageant during the holiday season, the decision to reschedule will allow for more contestants in January and include the teen contestants in the activities of the Miss North

Carolina USA Pageant. The contestants of the teen pageant will be special guests of the live stage show and state-wide telecast of the Miss North Carolina USA Pageant Jan. 14.

On Sunday, Jan. 15, the reigning Miss North Carolina Teen USA, Janet Freeman, will crown her successor, who will go on to compete in the nationally televised two-hour Miss Teen USA Pageant to be held in the Spring of 1984. Along with special gifts

for all contestants, Miss North Carolina Teen USA 1984 will receive \$500 in cash, jewelry valued at \$2,000, a fur coat, an all expense paid trip to the 1984 Miss Teen USA Pageant, a competition gown, a custom-designed state costume to represent North Carolina in the national pageant and much more.

The search continues for young women to compete in the pageant.

Single women between the ages of 15-18 may qualify. No performing

talent is required. Due to the limitations of time, applications will be accepted immediately and candidates will be accepted up to the date of the pageant.

For free entry information, send a postcard with your name, address, telephone number and birthdate to: Miss North Carolina Teen USA National Headquarters, Tel Air Interests Inc., 1755 N.E. 149th St., Miami, Fla. 33181, or call (305) 944-3268.

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