

# The Big Week Is Here For Miss Brunswick County

BY LYNN CARLSON

The look and sound will be quintessential jazz singer when Larniece Laneer McKoy of Winnabow steps up to the microphone this week to perform for the Miss North Carolina Scholarship Pageant talent judges.

And no matter how accustomed they are to scrutinizing beautiful, talented women, she's bound to knock 'em out.

When the shapely Miss Brunswick County 1993 belts out Duke Ellington's "Hit Me With A Hot Note" she'll be wearing a fire-engine red bugle-headed strapless sheath gown with matching long gloves. People will pay attention.

One might think that with a singing talent like hers, McKoy might aspire to a career in the performing arts. But she has loftier goals. The rising senior at UNC-Chapel Hill is majoring in pre-law sociology with dreams of attending law school at either Carolina or Howard and becoming a district attorney—and someday a judge.

She has a role model in Miss America 1991, Marjorie Judith Vincent of Illinois, a law student at nearby Duke University, once inspired McKoy from afar and has taken time to share competition hints since McKoy won the Miss Brunswick County Scholarship Pageant in February.

By McKoy's side throughout the pageant will be David Clegg, former Brunswick County manager and mentor to the past nine Miss Brunswick County winners. Clegg, president of the Miss Brunswick County Scholarship Pageant, has seen to every detail of McKoy's reign and Miss North Carolina pageant preparation. They've spent long car rides between appearances "talking, talking and talking" about issues and events to prepare for the pageant interviews.

As both McKoy and Clegg are quick to point out, it's about more than sequins and tiaras. It's about squeezing every bit of opportunity out of your looks, talent and, most importantly, your communication skills.

Clegg runs down a quick bio of the nine local queens he's worked with. Among them are a physician, a successful entrepreneur, a teacher, a banker, a graduate student, an undergraduate, a studio owner and the wife of an official of the government of Ghana.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

MISS BRUNSWICK COUNTY, Larniece Laneer McKoy, is participating this week in the Miss North Carolina Scholarship Pageant in Raleigh. The finals will be televised Saturday at 9 p.m. on WECT Channel 6.

They'll be there in the audience at Saturday night's Miss North Carolina Pageant finals to support McKoy. So will her mother Janet and sister Jussani, along with a couple of her aunts.

It's the potential of pageant competition to clear the path to success that attracted McKoy. She was second runner-up for Miss Brunswick County in 1992. She has been first runner-up for both Miss Durham-Chapel Hill and Miss Greater Raleigh. Looking at videotape of her first Miss Brunswick County compe-

petition made her decide to try it again. The second time was the charm.

The months between becoming Miss Brunswick County and competing her junior year at Carolina have been a whirlwind of studies and appearances, voice lessons and physical work-outs. She's made 17 appearances in 17 weeks, including performing at the Azalea and Dogwood festivals and presiding over "lots of grand openings."

Though school ended May 17, the routine has intensified for McKoy, who has stepped up her rehearsal and

exercise regimen in preparation for this week's competition. The voice which thrilled the Miss Brunswick County pageant audience with Natalie Cole's "Orange-Colored Sky" is even stronger now, thanks to a voice coach McKoy said shares her philosophy that "singing does not just come from your lungs."

McKoy's performance style is inspired by Patti LaBelle "for her incredible stage presence" and Nancy Wilson, whose seemingly effortless voice "just comes out and makes it look so easy."

When McKoy does "Hit Me With A Hot Note" she'll be singing to an original arrangement made just for her by Milton Smith of Fayetteville, who was pianist for Elvis Presley. "He's outdone himself with this one," Clegg believes.

It's not singing for the judges, or talking with them, that has McKoy most nervous about the pageant. She's been a singer all her life, from crooning into a curtain rod as a little girl, to performing in the choir at Wilmington's Union Baptist Church. She wants to be a lawyer, so answering questions extemporaneously is no problem, either.

What's scary about the pageant is the dreaded swimsuit competition, "where you can't hide a thing; you're just vulnerable."

Too bad moral support can't take the jitters away. Between her family, and Clegg, and the sisterhood of former Miss Brunswick County winners, McKoy would be downright nonchalant. Even parading around in a bathing suit and high heels.

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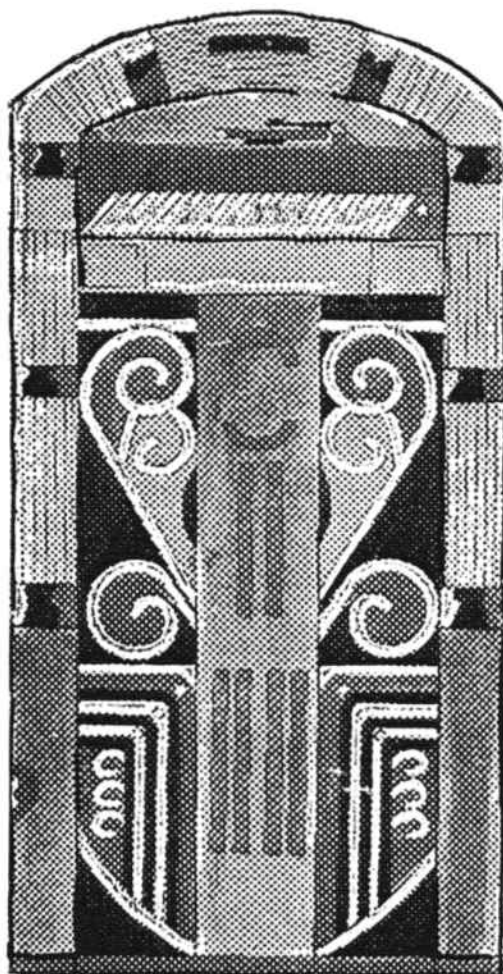
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