



Posture Queen Contests in Alabama

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This paper recounts the history of the Alabama State Chiropractic Association's posture queen program.

Discussion: Perfect posture contests were a successful, unifying, public relations program in the chiropractic profession in the 1950s and 1960s. The Alabama State Chiropractic Association was at the forefront in using these pageants to their fullest. While they had a short lived tenure, these contests increased the public's awareness of chiropractic during a time of struggle for licensure. For unknown reasons, this pageant disappeared in the late 1960s.

Conclusion: Alabama's posture queen program ran from 1956-1968. (J Chiropr Humanit 2008;15:67-80)

Key Indexing Terms: Chiropractic; History; Beauty

INTRODUCTION

Posture Queen Programs had their beginning in the Most Perfect Spine Contest of the American Chiropractic Association (1922-1930) at its 1927 convention. Through 1950, the National Chiropractic Association (NCA) seems to have been the sponsor of some type of national posture contest with the contest name varying from "Perfect Spine" to "Perfect Back". The 1933 "Most Perfect Back Contest" at the Denver NCA convention, drew 90 contestants. At the 1935 NCA Convention in Hollywood, California, the winner of the 200 contestant event was known as Miss Perfection. Life-sized, entire body x-rays were displayed along with a parade of finalists in bathing suits and evenings gowns with low backs. News reel

films taken of the contestant were shown in theaters throughout the country.¹ Due to national events, the contest was not held for the subsequent 15 years. However, resurgence came in 1950 as a part of a profession-wide "Correct Posture Week" co-sponsored by the International Chiropractic Association (ICA) and NCA. Correct Posture Week continued as a joint effort of the NCA and ICA thru 1953.

Another contest was the World Queen of Posture and Physical Fitness Pageant. Dr. Clair O'Dell of Southgate, Michigan, is credited with founding the World Queen of Posture and Physical Fitness Pageant, which ran from 1954 to 1968.² Under 14 years of his non-partisan leadership the Pageant achieved stability and profession-wide prestige.

The first available item in an Alabama State Chiropractic Association (ASCA) publication concerning an Alabama Posture Queen Contest (APQC) was in the May

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Paper submitted November 20, 2006, in revised form December 1, 2007 and November 13, 2008.

1956 issue of the ASCA's publication *The Chiropractic Horizon in Alabama*. Miss Carolyn Bryant was crowned "Miss Good Posture of Alabama" at the Tutwiler Hotel in Birmingham on April 21, 1956. Miss Mary Watson of Calhoun County was named the Alternate Queen. Dr. MJ Nappi was the event chairman.³ Queen Bryant represented Alabama in the International Good Posture Contest in St. Louis on June 24, 1956. The international winner was Miss Dorothy Tidwell of Mt. Pleasant, Texas, who was crowned by Dr. BJ Palmer at ceremonies held at the Chase Hotel. She received \$1,000 in cash and a \$1,000 scholarship to Logan Chiropractic College as prizes.⁴

According to Dr. "Boots" Arnold, the 1957 APQC state chairman, the contest was "Microscopic" in size. President Dr. Charles Warth chided the membership of the ASCA that they were not taking advantage of an opportunity to make news, "without the cost of a single cent."⁵ Following a 3 year hiatus, the APQC was revived. Baldwin County selected Ms. Francis Hicks of Pt. Clear as their Posture Queen on April 14 at the Masonic Temple in Robertsedale from a field of eight young ladies. This was a first time participation by this society in the APQC. Dothan and Birmingham had their society finals on TV. During the Birmingham pageant, the emcee, Everett Holle of WAPI-TV, interviewed ASCA President Dr. JL Below and Dr. Charles Warth, Posture Chairman about Chiropractic and posture. Calhoun County had their posture finals at Jacksonville College and had 35 contestants.⁶

The 1960 APQC was conducted on Friday May 20, 1960 before the ASCA convention in Mobile. The finalists were interviewed on Mobile TV. Miss Peggy Jackson of Hackneyville was pronounced the winner

Figure 1. Miss Peggy Jackson of Hackneyville, winner of the 1960 Annual Posture Queen Contest with her full spine X-ray. She was sponsored by the East Alabama Society (Photograph courtesy of Dr. Donald Durbin).



when the competition was over (Fig 1). Fred Woodress, the ASCA Public Relations Consultant, commented,⁷ "The posture contest had produced a great deal of good press and done a great deal for Chiropractic. It will continue to do a lot of good in future years." Still, Dr. Donald Durbin of Alexander City, who was to become APQC chairman in 1961, commented,⁸ "The small amount of funding and activity left this year's Posture Pageant wanting."

A higher level of interest in the 1961 APQC was generated by a sufficient budget and strong support from the ASCA Board of Directors. Civic clubs and businesses, including the Phenix City Lions, Royal Crown bottlers of Columbus, Georgia, and Mobile (Alabama) Pepsi Cola, sponsored local contests. Some had as many as 30 participants. All contestants were not

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