Immersed in activity

From the hallways of the Home Economics Building to the Mrs. Minnesota runway, Dee Henderson immerses herself in the activity at hand. Financing her own education, graduating magna cum laude with a degree in home economics in business in three years time, earning the prestigious Medalion Award (highest nonacademic honor awarded to a student), participating on the swim team, cheerleader for the wrestling team, captain of the swim team and wrestling cheerleaders her senior year, and serving as residence hall government representative all kept Henderson busy while on campus. During this time she also worked at True Value Hardware, Kernel Restaurant and Neighbor’s Attic.

Continuing her education, Henderson graduated from St. Thomas with a master’s degree in business communication in 1990. She soon established her own business as a marketing consultant, Marketing That Work Inc. She and her husband, Ken, are also the owners of the Doctor’s Wellness Center, with centers located in Roseville and Bloomington, Minn.

So not much has changed as she continues to juggle several activities at one time—parent, advocate for adoption, business owner, consultant, host parent for international students and now Mrs. Minnesota.

Henderson’s journey to the Mrs. Minnesota International pageant was, in part, an avenue to assist in her efforts as an advocate for adoption.

“In order to be heard, you need a title like CEO, President, etc., and you need an audience to hear the message,” she said. “Without the title you receive no invitations to speak. So I entered the pageant in order to be heard. There are no monetary advantages in this. The candidates must be committed to family, involved in community service programs and have a platform.”

Competition during the pageant included personal interviews, and modeling of aerobic and evening gown attire.

Henderson and her family are living the platform she is promoting. In the summer of 1995, they began discussing the possibility of adopting a child. Through her research, Henderson found that there would be a tremendously long wait for a domestic newborn.

Henderson said, “It was heartbreaking to leave the other children in the orphanage.”

There are approximately 80 million children in the world who have no parents and less than 1 percent get adopted. “I know that those who remain in institutional care, such as the orphanage, are unprepared for life, and statistics have shown that they have an extremely high rate of drug abuse or are suicidal.” Henderson said. “So to leave them was absolutely heartbreaking. Although I cannot adopt all of them, I can become a voice and an advocate on their behalf. Mrs. Minnesota is a way to be heard.”

Pageant activities are not completely new to Henderson.

“Most of my best friends while at Stout were Wendy Wagner Holosch 83 who, during her senior year, was crowned Miss Wisconsin,” she said. Henderson has many fond memories of her time at UW-Stout. “Wendy spent a lot of time with John and Fritz Parlong, and they often included me in some of their outings, especially the Friday night fish fry at the Moose Lodge.”

“Bob Ward was one of my favorite professors,” Henderson said. “I loved his classes. Great photography is really art through a camera,” he would say. He inspired my love for photography and I still carry that today. I look at things differently because of him. Bob also cared about you as an individual, not just as a student.”

Another professor Henderson remembers fondly is Leo Kivijarv. “He was somewhat unconventional,” she said. “He made our speech classes fun. On a warm day, he would dress in several layers—it was his way of making sure he got our attention.”

“I have only good comments, thoughts and feelings about the education I received and the college life in general at Stout,” Henderson said. “I loved it, I had a great time and it helped prepare me in my field of study. I still recommend and promote Stout.”

With all this behind her, what lies ahead?

Henderson will be in Tyler, Texas, Aug. 27 and 28, competing for the title of Mrs. US International. Watch for the results in the next issue of this publication.

Henderson would be happy to talk with Stout alumni about issues dealing with international adoption. Learn more about Dee and Ken’s adoption story at www.amandah.com. Call the alumni office at 715/232-1151 for more information.
Miller is working on his next chapter

Born and raised in Wisconsin, Gene Miller '47 briefly attended the Stout Institute before World War II. During the war he worked in a shipyard and served in the Army Air Forces as an instructor pilot in the Southwest Training Command with the single engine fighter division. He flew the many AAF training aircraft, having a great love of the North American AT-6. By a wartime quirk, he later took transition into B-17s. Gene was getting ready to make another transition to B-29s, but the war ended.

After the war, Miller returned to Stout and graduated in 1947. After graduation, he taught industrial arts in Perham, Minn., until 1949. That year, he moved to Fergus Falls, Minn., where he taught building and welding courses to "con- farm" veterans.

During his time in Fergus Falls, Gene had attended summer courses at the University of Minnesota at St. Paul, and in 1951 left to complete his master's degree in agriculture. He was then employed as a shop teacher with the University of Minnesota Southern School of Agriculture in Waseca, Minn., until 1954.

Miller then relocated with the University of Minnesota to the Northwest School and Experiment Station in Crookston, Minn. There, he was an instructor and superintendent of buildings and grounds.

Gene then continued to fly while he taught and researched under the new college and experiment station departments and wrote plans for new collegiate aviation programs during 1966.

Later, he turned completely to research and station, and completed 32 years at the University of Minnesota in Crookston. Throughout his career Gene was involved in flying activities, organizing and incorporating four flying clubs, and owning and flying various aircraft. He has also been an active member of the Minnesota Flying Farmers for 20 years, serving as president in the later '60s.

Miller and his family were also involved in raising and showing Quarter Horses and Appaloosa breeds. In 1971, Gene published a childen's book titled Backshot and the Birthday Pony. He also wrote two sequels, but they were not published.

After his retirement in 1986, Gene wrote and published a book about his hometown of Fairchill, Wis., called Fairchild—When You and I Were Young; two volumes about his entire flying career titled The Wish and the Wisdom; and a complete two volume story of Horses in Our Lives. In the last book, Gene wrote about area horsemen and collected volumes of information for the Polk County Historical Archives in Crookston.

Miller and his wife, Arline, spent the entire summer of 1993 on the Mississippi River in their houseboat, and Gene subsequently wrote a 200-page book about their experiences.

In 1995, the university asked Miller to write the Hundred Years History of the Northwest Experiment Station, which was published for their centennial celebration. A book of poems representing years of communication with friends is now taking shape.

Gene’s most recent book was published by Grass Roots Publishers on June 26, 1999, and is titled Pilots Along the Red River Valley. The whole picture at Stout excited Gene. "I loved the shops, basketball and social life, and was greatly impressed by all of the Stout instructors of that era," he said.

Gene said that his training at Stout prepared him well for the working world. "My Stout training in machine shop was good enough that I walked right in and started work as an outside machinist."