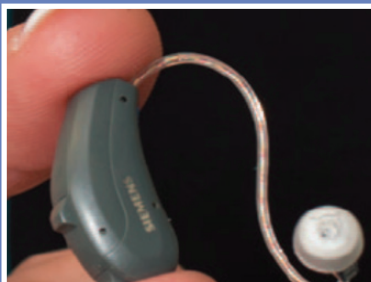


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A Golden Anniversary



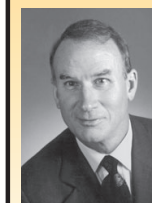
Fifty years ago, longtime Manotick resident Jennifer Hosten (seated) won the controversial 1970 Miss World Pageant. Last week, *Misbehaviour*, a movie based on the pageant starring Keira Knightley, Greg Kinnear and Gugu Mwamba-Raw, began streaming in Canada on Disney Plus and Amazon Prime. For the full story on Hosten's reflections on the 50th anniversary of the pageant and her thoughts on the movie, see pages 12 and 13.

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Fifty years later, we still have a long way to go

The 1970 Miss World pageant, won by longtime Manotick resident Jennifer Hosten, served as a lightning rod for women's rights and racial issues across the world. The pageant is the subject of the movie 'Misbehaviour', now streaming on Disney Plus and Amazon Prime

BY JEFF MORRIS

For Jennifer Hosten, the entire thing seems surreal.

Next month, it will mark 50 years since she became a global celebrity by winning one of the most famous and controversial Miss World pageants in history. This year, with the release of her autobiography and the movie *Misbehaviour*, based on the 1970 Miss World pageant, Hosten has been taken on a journey back in time to relive that year and to also understand the importance of stage she stood upon.

"The movie is called *Misbehaviour*, but it's not me misbehaving," Hosten said with a smile from her home in Oakville. "The title comes from everything that was going on surrounding the pageant."

Fifty years later, many consider the 1970 Miss World contest the most memorable and famous of all global beauty pageants. The film has conceptually been in the works for more than a decade.

Hosten, a native Grenada, lived in Osgoode and then Manotick for nearly four decades. Although she left the area 12 years ago, she still considers herself local and it will always be home.

"My children (Sophia and Beau Craig) both went to school at St. Leonard and St. Mark," she said, noting that Beau now lives in Whistler and Sophia is in Newmarket.

The movie, which stars Keira Knightley, Greg Kinnear, Gugu Mbatha-Raw and Jessie Buckley,

was released in March just before the coronavirus pandemic began. Last week, it began streaming on services that include Amazon Prime and the Disney Channel. Hosten, the first Black woman to win the Miss World pageant, said the racial and political climate in the world today brought a poignancy to the timing of its release.

"The movie is very topical right now because of the Black Lives Matter movement," Hosten said.

When the pageant started, host Bob Hope was heckled and Women's Liberation activists threw flour bombs on the stage, protesting how the pageant objectified and exploited women. These protests are the subject of *Misbehaviour*.

Keira Knightley plays Sally Alexander, a leading Women's Liberation protestor with academic ambitions. Knightley said she was struck by the multi-layered approach of the film.

"What I really loved about the script," Knightley recalled, "is that it is told from three different points of view; it's told from the point of view of the Women's Libbers, it's told from the point of view of Bob Hope - the host of that year's Miss World - and it's told from the point of view of the Miss World contestants."

Alexander and other activists saw the pageant as a perfect opportunity to have their voice heard worldwide.

"The Women's Liberation move-

ment was gathering momentum at that time," Hosten said. "I remember the protests and the flour bombs. But they weren't protesting us - the contestants. They were targeting the patronization of the pageant, and how we were being exploited."

Hosten said there was one awkward part of the contest in which she felt exploited.

"We were all in bathing suits, and we were asked to turn around," she said. "That was obviously objectifying us. But we did it."

Knightley said this sexual objectification of women is what motivated her character and other protestors at the time.

"From the Women's Lib point of view, it was sexual objectification of women's bodies; them walking out on stage, giving their vital statistics, people giving them marks out of 10, standing around for people to check out their derrieres," Knightley said. "The fact that this is family entertainment, that this is what every little girl is meant to aspire to be - that it's simply about what they look like and not what they think or what they do - a new generation of women found this absolutely outrageous."

While some of the contestants were lifelong pageant participants and veterans, Hosten had never considered entering a pageant of any kind.

"It was quite accidental," she said of how she became a contestant in the pageant. "I was working as a flight attendant, and Miss Guy-



Bob Hope, the host of the 1970 Miss World pageant, joins winner Jennifer Hosten and runner up Pearl Jansen of South Africa for a photo.

ana was on the plane, on the way to Miss World. One of the people with her asked if I would have my picture taken with her. The picture ended up in newspapers over the next few days. When I got back to Grenada, someone from the tourism board asked me to enter a pageant at home. One of the prizes was going to Miss World. I was kind of adventurous and decided it was a pragmatic opportunity."

Hostens, then 23, became Grenada's first ever contestant in the Miss World pageant. Both she and the government of Grenada saw the event as a chance to promote tourism on the Caribbean island. Personally, she also saw the pageant as a stepping stone that could open doors for her own professional career.

"I went into the pageant hoping I would spend some time with the media so I could talk to them and promote Grenada," Hosten said. "But I didn't really get that chance. The media was only interested in the contestants they thought would win. Even when we went to Royal Albert Hall for the rehearsal, only 15 girls were invited on stage, and they were the ones who were considered the most likely to win - Miss USA, Miss Sweden, Miss UK - the rest of us just sat in the audience and watched."

The snub served as a motivator

for Hosten.

"I practiced walking in my room," she said. "I was more determined than ever to shine the next day."

The morning of the pageant, the contestants that did not get the opportunity to go on stage with the 15 favourites were given the chance to go to the Royal Albert Hall to be on the stage. Hosten jumped at the opportunity, and stayed behind when the other contestants who also went to try out the stage went back to their hotel.

"I just walked on the stage for an hour and a half," Hosten said. "It gave me great confidence."

Hosten and her sister, who was in London with her as her chaperone, had gone to New York before the contest to go shopping. Hosten said her evening gown was her "secret weapon." However, as stunning as she looked in her dress, there was something else that helped her win.

"I had worked for BBC radio," Hosten said. "The advantage I had over all the other contestants was my experience as a communicator. I wanted to be the whole package, not just someone who would win on looks. I wanted to be someone who could effectively represent women."

FIFTY
continues on page 13



Jennifer Hosten, left, poses for a photo with Gugu Mbatha-Raw at the premier of *Misbehaviour*. Mbatha-Raw, an acclaimed British actress, portrayed Hosten in the movie. PATHE PHOTO

FIFTY continues from page 12

While the Women's Liberation protestors attracted attention to a television audience of 100 million people, the final results also raised questions about race. Hosten became the first Black woman to win the contest. The runner-up was another Black woman, Pearl Jansen of South Africa. Jansen was one of two South African women in the contest. Because of apartheid in that country, South Africa entered both a white woman and a Black woman in the contest.

Hosten had become friends with Jansen at the event, but was unable to maintain the friendship over the years.

"Pearl was the runner-up, and the white South African contestant, Jillian Jessup, finished fifth," Hosten said. "However, when they returned home, Pearl was sent back to where she was from and she was never heard from, while Jillian was invited to visit with the Governor. No one could find Pearl or knew what happened to her. The producers of the movie were able to track her down and she was at the premier of the movie. It was so nice to see her again and to continue our friendship."

Hosten had never considered that



After winning the 1970 Miss World contest, Jennifer Hosten accompanied Bob Hope, to visit U.S. troops in Vietnam.

race would be an issue in the contest and was taken back by the reaction to her victory.

"Growing up in the Caribbean, race was never really an issue," she said. "And in a global pageant with 58 countries represented, there would be women of all races there. But what became evident was that the standard

of beauty in 1970 was a Eurocentric standard."

Hosten said she was surprised and disappointed in the media coverage following her win.

"The first newspaper I saw the next day had a big headline, 'Miss World is Black'," Hosten said. "I thought maybe they would highlight the small island I came from. Then I saw another headline, 'Well, is she the most beautiful woman in the world?' It was shocking to me that this was what greeted me after winning."

Adding to the backlash after the judging was that Pearl Jansen was the runner up.

"There was a lot of speculation publicly and in the media that since two women of colour finished first and second in the contest, there must have been some sort of collusion," Hosten said.

Despite the controversy, Hosten fulfilled her obligations as 1970 Miss World with dignity and grace as she became a global celebrity. She accompanied Bob Hope to Vietnam and was on the cover of many magazines.

When her tenure as Miss World ended, Hosten put the experience behind her and used it as a stepping stone to further her own career. She worked in customer relations with Air Canada and got married to David Craig. They moved to the area from Bermuda in 1973, and Hosten earned her Master's Degree in Political Science and International Relations at Carleton University. In 1978, she became Grenada's High Commissioner to Canada. She has also served as the Technical Advisor on Trade to the Eastern Caribbean States.

In 1992, her thesis on the effect of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on the Commonwealth Caribbean was published.

In 2011, Hosten took her career in a completely different direction and earned a Master's Degree in Psychology. She worked as a psychotherapist until retiring.

"Being Miss World was part of my journey," Hosten said. "It was an incredible experience. It helped shape me, but it doesn't define me."

Hosten became aware several years ago that a film on the 1970 Miss World contest was in the works. She shared her diary of the contest with the film's producers. She was pleased to learn that Gugu Mbatha-Raw was selected to play her.

"A few years ago, I watched the movie Belle with a friend," Hosten said. "Gugu was very good in that film. My friend said afterward, 'My goodness, she could play you.' When I found out she would be playing me, I was very happy."



Jennifer Hosten also released her autobiography this year. While the movie Misbehaviour focuses on the 1970 Miss World pageant and ends with the pageant, Hosten said the book details things that happened in her life after winning the contest.

Mbatha-Raw, an acclaimed British actress who has won numerous national and international awards on top of being named a Member of the Order of the British Empire, visited Hosten and they also went to Grenada.

"We had about four days in Grenada, which was incredible," said Mbatha-Raw. "It was a really evocative experience to see it through her eyes, to see where she grew up, to hear stories from her childhood and her experiences there. That was a really invaluable and very inspiring way to get to know her."

Philippa Lowthorpe, the director, said Mbatha-Raw absorbed everything to do with Hosten, and brought a sense to Hosten's great depth and steely calm.

"She remembered everything very vividly," Mbatha-Raw said of Hosten, "and to be able to have her reflections and also to then have the real footage and marry the two together into the essence of who this person was and is, was really interesting."

Hosten said that the movie ends at

the end of the Miss World contest.

"The contest was only a small part of my life," she said. "It was only the beginning of a long journey."

Hosten said the timing of the movie could not have been better.

"Young women today take a lot of things for granted," she said. "There are so many opportunities for women today that were not open to us in 1970."

"One thing that became clear to us in 1970 is that the rights women were fighting for then did not include women of colour. We have come so far since then with regard to racism, but as we all know, there is still a long way to go. When we stop talking about it, we will have reached where we want to be."

The movie, Hosten said, focuses on a message that is as relevant today as it was in 1970.

"There are many things we need to not take for granted," she said. "We need to not be afraid to speak up when we see injustice or inequality. It's time for us to be brave. It's time for us to walk the talk."



Jennifer Hosten went back to school and received a Master's Degree in Psychology in 2011. She recently retired from her career as a psychotherapist and now lives in Oakville.