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# Reflecting On an Eighty-Year Tradition

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## Reflecting On an Eighty-Year Tradition

*Article Written by*

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Eighty years ago a very special tradition began in Dexter, MO. The very first Miss Dexter pageant was held in 1932. As we've seen this weekend, this tradition is still going strong in the town of Dexter. People of all ages still anticipate this annual pageant.

Mary Ulen was part of the first Miss Dexter court. Mary was born in 1914 in Essex, MO. She then was raised in Dexter.

Mary couldn't recall how many girls were in the pageant since it was eighty years ago, but she remembers being very excited. She was seventeen-years-old at the time of the pageant.

All the gowns worn by the first Miss Dexter court were borrowed. Mary says, "It was during the depression and no one had the money to buy one."

Ms. Mary Ulen's sister had a good job at the time of the pageant, and that is whom Mary borrowed her formal dress from. "The dress was Apricot Chiffon Velvet. It was very pretty," Mary recalls of her dress worn in the pageant.

The above photo is the top five in the first Miss Dexter Pageant. Mary Ulen is pictured on the front row to the left.

Mary Ulen was not only a beauty queen, but was very athletic as well. Mary played basketball on her high school team and says she was a pretty good player and loved the sport. After Ms. Ulen started talking about her high school years she joked, “I majored in fun.”

Mary says, “We all need to have fun, but always be of service to others.”

Mary Ulen went to nursing school and then became a registered nurse. After becoming a registered nurse, Mary got a job working for Dr. Hoxie. Dr. Hoxie was an ear, nose, and throat specialist. His office was in Poplar Bluff, and Mary says she did everything in the office.

</images/Jessica's Pics/Ms Ulen.jpg>

Mary Ulen is now ninety-eight years old and is still very active and witty. Mary has lived at Central Gardens Residential Care in Dexter for several years. When asked about living at Central Gardens, Mary says, “I’m right where I need to be. I love it here.”

The photo on the right is Ms. Ulen at age ninety-eight living at Central Gardens.

Ms. Ulen has had a good life with lots of ups and downs. She says we wouldn’t appreciate the ups if we didn’t have the downs.

Every evening before supper, Ms. Ulen is known to stand at her table and ask the blessing before partaking in the meal.

As seen in the photo, the style of dresses worn has changed quite a bit over the eighty-years, but the beauty remains throughout the years of each Miss Dexter pageant.

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