

Both Miss and Mrs. America Believe Religious Faith Key to Basic Beauty

By GEORGE V. CORNELL
NEW YORK — Two of America's most beautiful women say beauty consists not of curves—but of convictions.

"It's what you believe and what you do," said Sharon Kay Ritchie, the new Miss America.

"It's what's in your heart," said Mrs. Ramona Deitemeyer, the current Mrs. America. "It must come from the inside out."

These two Midwestern lovelies, with charm, good looks and talent to spare, maintain that the inner attitude is more important.

The key to that basic beauty, in their view, is religious faith.

Both of them, cast in the national limelight this year in separate competitions, have been staunch church workers since they were in pigtails.

"It's always been part of my life — as much as eating and sleeping," said Mrs. Deitemeyer, a poised blue-eyed blonde from Lincoln, Neb. "I just can't imagine living without it."

"I feel that if one puts religion and spiritual education first in the home, everything else will take care of itself."

Miss Ritchie, a glowing young girl with blue eyes, a soft voice and dark plum-red hair, said that if she didn't have a religion, a set of beliefs, there are many times when I'd have been completely lost.

Christians Happy

"One who lives a Christian life should be the happiest of all people," she said. "They are living in tune with God. I think it is the only way to live."

She taught Sunday school in The First Christian Church in her hometown of Grand Island, Neb., and when she went away to Colorado Women's College in Denver, took over leadership of the daily student chapel there.

Meet With Jesus

"Each morning when I wake up, I meet Jesus in prayer and have Him with me the rest of the day," she said. "I'd feel an awful emptiness when I woke up if there wasn't a God to believe in."

Her eyes shine when she talks about it. "It's my favorite subject," she said.

To her, faith is a mover of mountains. "I know it works," she smiled. "If you visualize a goal, believe in it and expect it, in due time you will achieve it." As for her climb to the Miss America title, she said:

"I knew God was with me every step of the way. Without that assurance, I don't think I could have done it."

Bible Verse

In the game of life, she keeps in mind this favorite Bible verse, John 11:9—

"And I say unto you, ask and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

The song she most likes to sing: "He Leadeth Me."

Mrs. Deitemeyer, mother of five little children — three girls and two boys — teaches Sunday school in Lincoln's Christ Lutheran Church, of the Missouri Synod.

So does her husband, Carl, who is president of the congregation.

"I don't think a home can be secure and happy without a religious base," she said. "Too many people think they can handle life all by themselves. Often, too late, they find out they can't."

On the morning of the finals, she said, she turned to a random scripture, Hebrews 12:1—

"Wherefore seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

Tell Experiences

That verse, she said, "indicated to me that I would be a witness through this activity. So wherever I go, wherever I make a speech, I relate the experiences by which we have found family strength through religion."

Any idea that the reign of these two American "queens" involves a big social whirl and rounds of night life is badly mistaken, when it comes to this pair. Neither smokes or drinks. Neither likes night clubs.

"I'd rather go for a buggy ride in Central Park," said Miss Ritchie, who has been carefully scheduling her Sundays so she'll get to attend all the noted churches in New York.

Grace at Meals

As for daily religious habits, both Miss and Mrs. America have them:

In Mrs. Deitemeyer's home, there is grace at each meal, and each evening after dinner, there is a devotional, with informal family discussion of the topic, then bedtime prayers.

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the 35-year-old housewife said. "We stress the informality, and encourage the children to ask questions and join in the discussion."

Devotional Book

Miss Ritchie, in addition to her morning prayers, keeps with her a devotional book, and reads a section each morning. Then at night, she prays before she goes to sleep.

"It brings peace and restful thoughts," she said.

Miss Ritchie, 18, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Forrest A. Ritchie. Her father, president of her hometown church congregation, recently gave her a book with a personal inscription which she said has helped her ever since:

"Walk With God"

"Walk with your hand in God's and your feet will never stumble."

As for that matter of beauty being not how you're made — but what you make of yourself — Miss Ritchie said character always "shows up."

"People who appreciate the good things in life, whose values are in the right places, are the enjoyable people to be with," she said. "They radiate happiness. They have a fresh glow of expectancy."

"Without faith, it seems to me a person would be very, very empty and insecure, with no knowledge of where he's going, or why, or the purpose of it all."

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