

Penne Percy—Girl in a Whirl

What happens to a Family Weekly cover girl? This one has won the Maid of Cotton title—and a role in a Hollywood film!

By ROBERT PEER



Left: Penne wears a lime and cornflower-blue dress by Helga, one of the 42 cotton outfits designed especially for her. Above: As Family Weekly's second Miss Somebody, she was a cover girl May 29, 1960.



Penne gets a good-luck kiss from Mom, once a Maid of Cotton finalist herself.

TWO YEARS AGO this week, Penne Percy, a sparkling 17-year-old Texas blonde, became FAMILY WEEKLY's second Miss Somebody.

A lot has happened to Penne (pronounced Penny) since then—so much that she again rates a cover feature.

In December, the girl from Waco was chosen from among more than 300 Southern belles to reign as the 1962 Maid of Cotton.

"You can't imagine what this means to a girl from the South," she says. "If you live in a cotton state, you grow up with the idea of entering this contest. Why, my two little sisters, who are only 14 and 8, are already thinking about it."

Penne could hardly ask for more—a Southern girl's dream had come true. But more good fortune was on its way. Recently, a famous Hollywood movie producer, Joe Pasternak, asked her the question every American girl would like to hear: "How would you like to be in the movies?"

He first saw Penne on FAMILY WEEKLY's cover and was so impressed he asked to meet her. After seeing her in person, he offered her a

role in his next MGM film, "The Courtship of Eddie's Father," with Glenn Ford.

How have the glamor and excitement affected Penne's outlook? "I still can't believe it's happening to me," she confessed over lunch at the Beverly Hills Hotel recently.

"After my picture appeared on the cover of FAMILY WEEKLY, the phone rang almost constantly. Everywhere I went in Waco people recognized me. When I went to college in Austin, it was the same story all over again."

Penne believes the FAMILY WEEKLY story and cover helped bring her to the attention of the judges of the Maid of Cotton contest. This development was especially pleasing to her because she had a very personal reason for wanting to enter this contest—and win it.

Her mother, the former Ann Green, reached the Maid of Cotton finals in 1941 but was disqualified when it was discovered she was only five-foot-four instead of the required five-foot-five. So, in a way, Penne won the crown for her mother as well as for herself.

As Maid of Cotton, she has been caught up in a wonderful whirl of excitement. She re-

ceived a 42-piece wardrobe (all cotton, of course), 23 pieces of luggage, a new car, and an opportunity to travel throughout the U.S. and five foreign countries as good-will ambassador for the American cotton industry. Right now she is in Paris on the last leg of her tour.

Of course, being Maid of Cotton requires more than a pretty face. As representative of a great industry, she has to be a personable and levelheaded diplomat, too. Penne has handled this phase of her task well, just as anyone who knows her would have predicted.

Fellow students at the University of Texas remember her as a girl who was serious about her studies and who helped pay her own way by working part time as a fashion adviser in an Austin department store.

Penne enjoyed college life—and she met a boy there she likes very much. But finishing college and getting married may be a long way off for this lovely Miss Somebody from Texas. Her Maid of Cotton tour has taken her away from campus for six months. And she may be away even longer if her movie career turns out to be as promising as it now appears.

COVER:

Photographed by John Engstead, vivacious Penne Percy was a Family Weekly cover girl two years ago. Since then, she has become a "Girl in a Whirl." See story above.

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