

Baby's A Star

Some parents go to incredible lengths to put their kids in the spotlight

scene

The Girls Preen, Mom Panics

"We learned as we went along," says Tammy Sikes. "Things like, you don't dress them in ruffled socks and you don't cut their bangs."

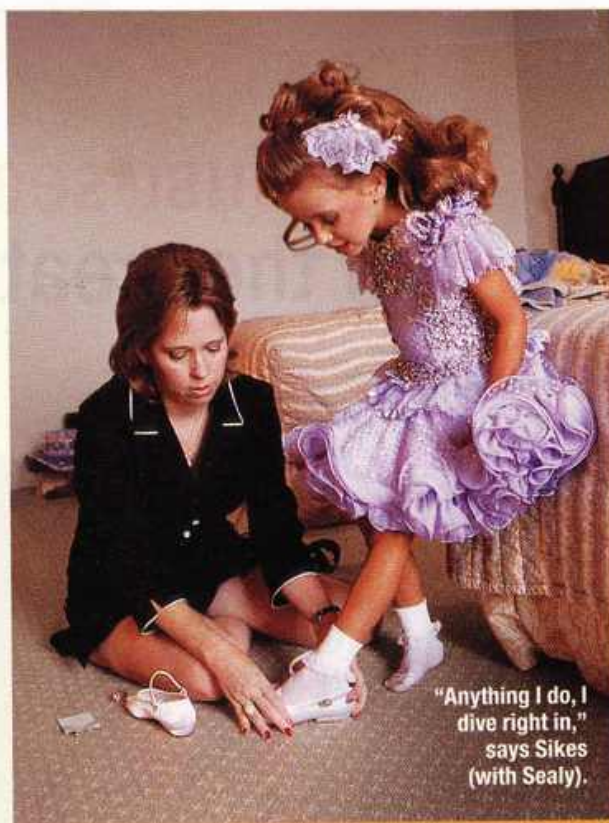
Welcome to the world of children's beauty pageants, where one tiny dress can cost \$2,000 and the mothers are far more charged up than their charges. Here's what a regular pageant day involves for Sikes, 36, whose daughters Savannah, 6, and Sealy, 5, competed in 20 pageants in six different states last year: "When we get to the hotel, I take them to get tanned," she says. "The night before, while they're watching TV in their pajamas, I'm hot-rolling their hairpieces. Then I take the hairpieces to the hair-and-makeup people, who prepare them for the next day. Then I have to get up early to fix their hair, take them to have their makeup done and feed them their snacks like a little birdie so they don't smear their lipstick. At pageants," she adds, "Mom is the one whose job it is to panic." For Sikes, a former trial lawyer who now runs guest cottages and gift shops in Fredericksburg, Texas, with husband Barry, 38, it's "a chance to enjoy our love of sparkly clothes and have some getaway, fun, girl time," she says. "For the kids it's a fun road trip with hotel swimming pools, room service, other girls to play Barbies with." The gibes of those who might suggest she's the one playing with Barbies don't bother Sikes. "People say the moms are living vicariously through our children," she says defiantly. "Well, I dare anyone to say that about me."

A CHILD'S LIFE

I was beyond disgusted after reading "Baby's a Star." These moms need to get a life of their own. Wendy Callaghan was quoted as saying, "Every father and mother is a stage parent, and if they're not, that means they're not involved with their kids." Being involved with your children is about loving them and helping them grow into mature, responsible adults. Let these little girls be children. I was sickened by the picture of the little girl who looked like a little 25-year-old adult. It made me want to puke.

Tammy Brumm, Saukville, Wis.

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"Anything I do, I dive right in," says Sikes (with Sealy).

What It Takes to Make It

- * Photo portfolio: Up to \$450
- * Costumes: \$3,000 per year
- * Makeup and hair: Up to \$300 per contest

What They Get

- * Earnings: A few hundred dollars a year
- * Trophies: The Sikes girls have 100.

Photograph by CHRIS HAMILTON

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