

BAYLOR LINE

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ALUMNI CHANGING the WORLD

Ukrainian Odyssey

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*Claire St. Amant '08
in Tymonytsya, Ukraine*

GRAD AT A GLANCE

Tyler rose

Showing that beauty is more than skin deep

NAME: Dr. Synthia Traugbber West '61

WHEN I GROW UP: Since the age of four, West has had a love for entertaining. Involved in church performances, voice and piano lessons, twirling, and dancing, West had a natural rhythm and talent for many creative things. "I just came out of the womb with rhythm," says West, pictured at the 2008 Ms. Texas Senior America pageant. Each day, as the high school marching band passed by her childhood home in Gladewater, she would grab her tiny baton, rush to the road, and parade alongside the students. Her interest in twirling continued through college, where she became a Golden Girl at Baylor University. But upon graduating in

1961, West's life took her in a different direction. Focusing on her career and family, West earned a doctoral degree in psychology from Texas A&M, worked in the public school system as a counselor, and married her college sweetheart, Royce '61. But throughout the years, West never forgot her passion for entertaining.



IT'S NEVER TOO LATE: At the age of fifty-seven, West serendipitously stumbled upon a flyer for Ms. Texas Senior Classic. "It was standing straight up in the trash can like it was in a picture frame," she says. She had only been in two pageants when she was younger, but this one called to her. Three years shy of the criteria for entry, West held onto the flyer and entered once she turned sixty years old. True to her nature, West flourished at the first pageant, electrifying judges with her gregarious charm, exuberant attitude, and flare for life. She had found her stage once again—and with it, a new direction for her life. West went on to win Ms. Congeniality in 2000 and captured the title of Ms. Texas Senior Classic in 2001. She was crowned the 2008-09 Ms. Texas Senior America, the most prestigious state pageant title for women age "sixty or better," as West phrases it.

THE LIFE OF A BEAUTY QUEEN: Since winning the crown, West has remained extremely active in the world of pageantry. "I go around to nursing homes and retirement centers, and entertain seniors while also educating them about positive living and mental well-being," West says. She is also involved in health fairs and pageant clubs, traveling throughout the state to promote the pageant and find new recruits. When asked about slowing down or taking a break, West chuckles. "Things will keep going as long as there are people like me who are energetic and want to tell the world about positive living, aging gracefully, and loving life," she says. West adds that her positive attitude springs from her love and devotion to the Lord. "My motto is Romans 8:28," she says, "to those who have been called according to His purpose."

—Julie Copenhaver