Cotton Queen XLIII: Ville Platte's Brooke Tate cherishes royal year

By: Bernice Ardoin
Lifestyles Editor

Dorothy Brooke Tate became the seventh Ville Platte beauty to wear the Louisiana Cotton Festival crown.

Last October, Ville Platte native Jill Perdreaux crowned the Miss Ville Platte queen as her successor to the Cotton Queen title. And what a year it has been for Brooke.

The 10-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Greg Tate of Ville Platte, Brooke is the granddaughter of Mr. and Mrs. Leroy Releau, Mrs. Ruth Tate, the late Mr. Alvin Tate, and Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Briden.

She is a 1996 graduate of Sacred Heart High School and is currently attending Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge, where she is majoring in occupational therapy. She hopes to begin her studies at LSU Medical Center in Shreveport in May 1998.

In high school, Brooke was Sacred Heart's homecoming queen, ex-captain of the cheerleading squad, and graduated in the Top 10 of her senior class.

At LSU-E, she is a member of the Student Government Association, orientation leader, was named Outstanding Freshman of the Year, served as a Sigma Theta Kappa Honor Society Initiate, and is a member of the college's Psi Beta Kappa Honor Society. She is maintaining a 4.0 grade point average.

brooke is currently working part-time at LSU-E as a tutor and is carrying a full load during semester. She also volunteered this past summer at Heritage Manor Nursing Home.

Some of the highlights of Brooke's reign as Cotton Queen include taking part in the Queen of Queen's Pageant and attending the Washington D.C. Maid of Greens Ball. At the Queen of Queen's Pageant, Brooke was named third runner-up.

During the Marth Gras Ball, she had the opportunity to walk in front of President Bill Clinton.

"We toured the White House and Arlington Cemetery," Brooke notes. "I was able to meet many dignitaries while there.

Summer Parker, the Louisiana Yambilee Queen, was my roommate. We really had a good time and got to become really good friends," Brooke adds.

Recalling a year ago when the Cotton Festival title was awarded to her, Brooke relates, "It was the most special feeling. I knew the outcome would be whatever God wanted it to be. I didn't go into the pageant expecting to win. I just wanted to do my very best for my hometown," she says.

"When I won, I knew I was the first Miss Ville Platte to wear this crown in a long time. I was so excited because so many of my friends were there with me." Brooke says she cannot end her reign without giving special thanks to some important people who helped make this memorable year possible.

"Mrs. Vern Weeks, a great friend, was very special during my reign. I owe her a lot of gratitude. She was everything from a next-door neighbor to my best friend. She went beyond her call of duty and for that I'm very thankful. I thank my family for being very supportive of me during my reign."

"I thank my sister, Sheli Labree, for being so supportive and understanding through all of this. He put up with not having my sister as Cotton Queen stand in the way of our relationship. He has been very understanding and always wanted me to do what ever I wanted to do so I won't have any regrets later in life the queen shared.

"I have no regrets. All my dreams have been fulfilled. I've accomplished all. I've set out to do and I feel that through it all, I've done my best.

As Cotton Queen, Brooke traveled all over the state and represented her hometown at over 30 fairs and festivals this past year. A few of those include the Yambilee Festival, the Swiss Festival, the Creole Festival, the LSU-Forgatch Festival, the Louisiana Fur and Wildlife Festival, the Kenner Shrimp Festival, the DeSmule Shrimp Festival, the Jean Batard Festival, the Frog Festival, and the Special Education Art Festival."

Special Education Art Festival was real special. I got the chance to see what the special education students in our parish has done in preparation for this event. I'm glad I had the opportunity to be part of this event," she smiles.

Brooke says another cherished event during her reign was getting the chance to become close friends with Ms. Mobile Fantonett, the 1996-97 La Reine. "She's so proud of her. She's a special lady. "I'm glad that God gave me the opportunity to be a state queen. I'm now ready to complete the rest of my life with my education, get married and start a family after I finish school," she states contentedly. "And again," she pauses, "I thank God for making it all possible."
Christine Mitchem:
‘I’ve always dreamed of being Miss Ville Platte’

By: BERNICE ARDOIN
Lifestyles Editor

Miss Ville Platte Christine Mitchem extends a warm welcome to Ville Platte citizens to come out and enjoy this year’s Louisiana Cotton Festival.

“There’s something new to learn with each festival,” she says. “I'd like to see every one come out and have a fun-filled weekend at our festival,” she adds.

The 20-year-old queen is the daughter of Mr. Harley Mitchem of Ville Platte and the late Florence Mitchem. She is currently attending Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, where she is a junior majoring in nursing.

Christine was recently elected SGA senator in general college. She is a member of the fashion committee and models in fashion shows. She is a member of the Education First at LSU. This is a student organization where students research Legislative Bills and find out if those bills have a positive or negative effect on the LSU student body. This organization informs students about such bills.

Christine is also a member of the Student Christian Medical Alliance.

Being a queen is nothing new to Christine. She is a former Miss Ville Platte High, a former Ville Platte Princess, and a former Cracklin Festival Queen.

She enjoys Cajun dancing, exercising, reading, shopping and traveling.

Since becoming Miss Ville Platte, Christine has represented her hometown at nine events including: the Belaire Cove Cook-Off, the Louisiana Catfish Festival, and the Bon Mange Festival.

She works part-time in Baton Rouge for Gastroenterology Associates in the medical records department. Dr. Greg Fusilier, a native of Ville Platte, is one of the six doctors working there.

She also does volunteer work at Lady of the Lake Hospital in the emergency room department.

Christine quickly admits that being Miss Ville Platte and being a contestant for the Cotton Festival crown is definitely a highlight in her life. “I’m excited and anxious,” she says. “I can’t wait to meet the other contestants and welcome them to Ville Platte. I’d like to tell them the history of our Cotton Festival. “I’m really enjoying being Miss Ville Platte,” she adds. “With my accent, people all over can guess that I’m from Ville Platte,” she laughs. “I think that’s a great asset.”

“I speak in French when I introduce myself at other festivals,” she relates. “People stop and listen because it’s different. It definitely gets their attention.”

“I do this because I think it’s important to focus on our heritage. We’re losing out on it.”

Christine has roots in the cotton industry. “My maternal grandparents were cotton farmers. So were my maternal great-grandparents. I heard so many stories about the cotton fields. Cotton was pretty much their way of life.”

Recalling the night she was crowned Miss Ville Platte.

Christine vividly remembers, “The pageant was in March. The interview was nice. Of course,” she pauses, “I love to talk. The stage performance is always my favorite. I was contestant #9. When they called out my number, I began to cry. It was always a dream of mine to be Miss Ville Platte.

“I’m so proud to be representing my hometown. But wearing the crown doesn’t end the story. It’s what you do after the crown is won that really counts.

“There’s so much responsibility in winning a title,” Christine notes. “This is what makes your reign fulfilling. You are an ambassador for your city.”

Christine is dedicating her reign as Miss Ville Platte to her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Floyd Ortego. “I know they’re proud of me and it’s something I can give them back,” she says about her grandparents.

Whatever the outcome in this weekend’s Cotton Festival Coronation, Ville Platte will be well represented when Christine Mitchem walks out on stage.
“Stamp of approval” given

The Ville Platte Post Office in conjunction with the La. Cotton Festival Assn. takes special pride in hosting a special pictorial cancellation October 10th and 11th to celebrate the 1997 Cotton Festival.

Pictorial cancellations are postmarks that feature wording and/or graphics relating to fairs, conventions or other types of local celebrations. They are offered by the Postal Service to commemorate local events being celebrated in communities throughout the nation.

Pictorial cancellations are only authorized to be used at temporary stamp outlets. Collectors may obtain pictorial cancellations only at a temporary station. Employees of the Ville Platte Post Office will set up a temporary station at the Cotton Festival grounds on Friday and Saturday during the Festival. The special postmark will be available for souvenir purchases as well as the postmarking of any regular mail.

Don Frith and Gilbert "Winky" Aucoin
Wildflower exhibit:

Special feature during this year's Standard Flower Show

Sheila Saunders and Ruthie Evans, president and vice-president, respectively of the Pine Prairie Garden Club, will present a wildflower exhibit in Division III, the special exhibits division when the Magnolia Garden Club of Ville Platte stages a Standard Flower Show Cotton Festival weekend, October 11-12, 1997.

"When Corine Roberie, flower show schedule chairman, invited us to participate, we were reluctant," said Ruthie Evans. "But as she explained, it really became interesting and challenging," adds Sheila Saunders.

The purpose of Division III of the Standard Flower Show is to instruct and inform the public on goals and National Council of State Garden Club objectives which are:

1. To aid in protection and conservation of natural resources, promote civic beauty, encourage improvement of roadides and parks.
2. To encourage, and assist in establishing and maintaining botanical gardens and other horticultural centers for advancement of science, enjoyment and education of public.
3. To study and advance arts of gardening, horticulture, floral design, landscape designs, and environmental sciences.
4. To cooperate with other organizations in furtherance of foregoing objectives, by activities as may be determined by the Board of Directors of NCSGC.
5. To further horticultural education, conservation, and landscape design through gift scholarships.

"What will be the wildflowers in your exhibit?" Corine Roberie inquired. The response was that the entire exhibit will have been collected in the Pine Prairie area of Evangeline Parish, where as in other parts of the parish, there is interesting diversity of native flora.

Thank goodness for the assistance of Dawn Allen Newman, botanist and secretary of Friends of the Louisiana State Arboretum, the correct botanical name is provided with each plant specimen in the educational exhibit.

Cotton Festival Art Show announced

The 1997 Cotton Festival Art Show, sponsored by the Evangeline Art Association, is set for October 11 and 12, at the American Security Bank Civic Room, located at 126 East Main Street in Ville Platte.

The show will be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on October 11, and from 10 a.m. to parade time on Sunday, October 12. A reception is planned for Thursday, October 9, from 6:30-8 p.m.

Entries will be accepted at the bank civic room on Friday, October 3, from 10 a.m. till 2 p.m. and on Saturday, October 4, from 9 a.m. till noon. There will be a section for students, novices, and professionals. All media will be accepted, including photography. All works must be framed and ready to hang with wire hangers or they will not be accepted. Each person can enter up to five art works.

Divisions are:
Division I - Art; Division II - Novice (less than five years experience); Division III - Children's Art, and Division IV - Photography. Entry fee is $5 for each division. The show is open to members and non-members of the Art Association and only original work which has not been shown previously in a Cotton Festival Show will be accepted. Maximum size is 50 inches.

The Association reserves the right to reject work because of improper hanging facility, size, or suitability for family viewing.

In the media division, there are no separate categories. All art will be judged together. In photography black and white, and color photos will be judged separately.

Don't forget to visit The Cotton Festival Art Show this weekend in Ville Platte.