

Guide to

**Ellen L. Pilcher Collection**

MS 74

5 Boxes

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Prepared by Jerry Veatch  
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Donor unknown, presumably Ellen L. Pilcher or family

Library and Archives  
Arizona Historical Society Museum@Papago Park

## SCOPE, CONTENT AND HISTORICAL NOTE

Afflicted with polio at an early age, Ellen L. Pilcher grew up with the use of wheelchairs and crutches. In 1986, at the age of 37, she was selected queen in the inaugural Ms. Wheelchair Arizona Pageant and represented Arizona in the national pageant later that year. Much of this collection chronicles the events and activities of these two pageants. The 1986 Arizona Pageant, conducted in Phoenix, involved many young ladies from various areas of the state and, as with similar contests, the contestants answered questions which were judged by a panel. Winning the state competition qualified Pilcher to participate in the national competition in Williamsburg, Va. later that year, where she placed 2<sup>nd</sup> runner-up.

Returning to Arizona, Pilcher participated in many events and activities over the next 9 months, representing the state to publicize the expanding roles of disabled individuals. This collection contains numerous photos and related material collected during that period. The highlight of the collection consists of a large scrapbook assembled by Ellen, featuring some of the activities in which she participated; such as, the 1987 St. Patrick's Day Parade, Rodeo of Rodeos Parade, and participation in Arizona's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Parade. An additional personal scrapbook is also present, featuring events and materials from Ellen's early childhood, leading up to 1987. Several manuscripts are also present, including a lengthy biographical essay, "I Can't Let Them See Me Cry" and her Master's Thesis, "An Investigation of Opinions Expressed on First Impressions of a Disabled Person as Measured by the Semantic Differential." Pilcher wrote several articles in support of individuals with disabilities which are also included in this collection.

## CONTAINER LIST

Box 1. Folders 1 through 9: Wheelchair Pageant Newspaper

Articles.

Folder 10: 10 Photos

Ellen L. Pilcher

Pilcher as contestant

Contestants & well-wishers

Pilcher as contestant

Contestants

Contestants

Lady at podium

Singer & musicians

Singer & musicians

Unidentified man

Folder 11: 10 Photos

Young man in wheelchair

Pageant announcer

All pageant contestants

Contestant on stage

Contestant on stage

Ellen Pilcher

Pilcher on stage

Contestant on stage

Pilcher & other contestant  
Older lady & contestant

Folder 12: 10 Photos

Pilcher speaking into mic  
Pilcher speaking into mic  
Pilcher on stage  
Contestant answering question  
Pilcher and contestants  
Pilcher and contestants  
Pilcher with flowers  
Pilcher awaiting announcement  
Pilcher reacting to announcement  
Pilcher being crowned

Folder 13: 10 Photos

Pilcher receiving sash  
Pilcher with cup  
Pilcher with crown  
Pilcher receiving crown & sash  
Pilcher with host  
Pilcher with crown  
Pilcher waving  
Pilcher with crown  
Pilcher with crown  
Pilcher with crown

Folder 14: 10 Photos

Pilcher & unidentified man  
Pilcher & other contestant  
Pilcher & well wishers  
Pilcher with crown  
Pilcher kissing her husband  
Pilcher & unidentified man  
Friends eating  
Pilcher and well wishers  
Pilcher & friends  
Pilcher & well wishers

Folder 15: 10 Photos

Pilcher & flowers  
Pilcher & unidentified man  
Pilcher on sidewalk  
Pilcher's poster  
Picher & unidentified man in wheelchair  
Pilcher & unidentified lady

Pageant announcement poster  
Flowers  
Pageant workers  
Horse cart on Williamsburg, Va. street

Folder 16: 10 Photos

Contestants at Williamsburg, Va.  
Williamsburg parade marchers  
Pilcher in stocks at Williamsburg  
Contestants eating  
Pilcher petting Oxen hitched to cart  
Lady giving presentation  
Pilcher being sung to?  
A very pretty contestant  
Another contestant  
A lady receiving a facial

Folder 17: 10 Photos

Lady speaking to Pilcher  
Another pretty contestant  
Pilcher's husband  
Pilcher & escort  
Pilcher & escort  
Several contestants  
Contestant & friends  
Rehearsal  
Pilcher holding up hand  
Contestant's outside on walkway

Folder 18: 10 Photos

Rehearsal  
Pilcher & others  
Contestants outside pageant center  
Pilcher having hair done  
Pilcher having hair done  
Contestants having hair done  
Pilcher having hair done & answering questions  
Pilcher's face in mirror  
Pilcher & other contestant  
Rehearsal & kids on stage

Folder 19: 10 Photos

Rehearsal  
Rehearsal  
Rehearsal  
Rehearsal

Rehearsal  
Pilcher holding escort's hand & other contestant  
Pilcher & escort outside  
Pilcher arriving at pageant  
Contestant's preparing  
Pilcher outside with friend

Box 2. Folder 20: 10 Photos  
Pilcher studying notes  
Contestants & children performers  
Contestants & escorts on stage  
Pilcher addressing audience  
Contestants & MC on stage  
Contestants and singers on stage  
Audience at pageant  
Pilcher answering questions on stage  
Pilcher & contestants on stage  
Pilcher waving to crowd

Folder 21: 10 Photos  
111. Pilcher on stage, waving  
112. Pilcher answering questions on stage  
113. Pilcher & escort on stage  
114. Contestants on stage  
115. Queen of the 1986 Pageant  
116. Contestants on stage  
117. Pilcher receiving roses  
118. Contestants on stage with MC  
119. Contestants on stage with escorts  
120. People dancing

Folder 22: 10 Photos  
121. Pilcher & friends  
121a. Pilcher dancing  
122. Pilcher & escort dancing  
123. Close up of Ellen Pilcher  
124. Pilcher & trophy at gathering  
125. Pilcher receiving trophy  
126. Pilcher & unidentified man  
127. Pilcher & unidentified man outside  
128. Four speakers on platform  
129. Pilcher & unidentified lady  
130. Pilcher seated in helicopter

Folder 23: 10 Photos

131. Pilcher & Miss Arizona & clown
132. Pilcher & clown on stilts
133. View through front window of “chopper”
134. Chopper flight over Phoenix
135. Pilcher in vehicle
136. Balloon over Phoenix, seen from chopper
137. Pilcher & clown
138. Pilcher staffing disability booth
139. Male in wheelchair, speaking at mall
140. Stage at mall

Folder 24: 10 Photos

141. Pilcher meeting people in mall
142. Pilcher in a mall
143. Two men on stage
144. Man speaking on stage, outside
145. Pilcher meeting people
146. Pilcher meeting people
147. Pilcher meeting people
148. Sidewalk and palm trees
149. Pilcher at picnic
150. Pilcher & unidentified man

Folder 25: 10 Photos

151. Pilcher meeting a man
152. Pilcher & 4 people at Bobby McGee’s club
153. Bobby McGee’s club
154. Bobby McGee’s club
155. Pilcher at McGee’s club
156. Pilcher at McGee’s club
157. Pilcher at McGee’s club
158. McGee’s club
159. Two men and Miss Arizona
160. Pilcher dancing with “Pat”

Folder 26: 10 Photos

161. Pilcher with dog (working with Animals Benefit Club of Arizona)
162. Pilcher & dog at her feet
163. Pilcher & dog
164. Pilcher working with South Mountain Optimist Club
165. Pilcher at South Mount. Optimist club gathering
166. Pilcher at South Mount. Opt. gathering
167. Pilcher at Gas Balloon race
168. Pilcher at Gas Balloon race
169. Pilcher at Gas Balloon race
170. Pilcher at Gas Balloon race

Folder 27: 10 Photos

171. Pilcher with kids & dog, balloon race
172. Pilcher with dog, balloon race
173. Pilcher with Miss Arizona
174. Pilcher with cowboy
175. Pilcher with cowboy
176. Pilcher with cowboy
177. Pilcher with Ben Johnson
178. Pilcher & cowgirls
179. Pilcher & cowboys
180. Pilcher & cowboys

Folder 28: 10 Photos

181. Pilcher with actor Richard Farnsworth
182. Pilcher with Santa & dog-working with Humane Soc.
183. Pilcher with dog
184. Pilcher speaking to Companion Animal Assn. of Az.
185. Pilcher speaking to Companion Animal Assn.
186. Pilcher speaking to Companion Animal Assn.
187. Pilcher working with Sky 12 Country Station
188. Santa at Festival of Lights
189. Festival of Lights
190. Pilcher at Festival of Lights

Folder 29: 10 Photos

191. Pilcher & Festival of Lights
192. Human tree-Festival of Lights
193. Festival of Lights
194. Festival of Lights
195. Festival of Lights
196. Festival of Lights
197. Festival of Lights
198. Festival of Lights
199. Festival of Lights
200. Festival of Lights

Folder 30: 10 Photos

201. Ellen L. Pilcher
202. Ellen L. Pilcher
203. Fiesta Bowl Parade float
204. Fiesta Bowl Parade float
205. Fiesta Bowl Parade
206. Fiesta Bowl Parade
207. Pilcher on Fiesta Parade float
208. Pilcher on Fiesta Parade float

- 209. Fiesta Bowl parade
- 210. Fiesta Bowl parade

Folder 31: 10 Photos

- 211. Fiesta Bowl parade
- 212. Pilcher on float
- 213. Parade float
- 214. Parade float "Eliminate Polio"
- 215. Pilcher on float
- 216. Pilcher's father?
- 217. Pilcher speaking with woman at dinner
- 218. Pilcher shaking hands with woman
- 219. Pilcher on parade float
- 220. Pilcher's parade float

Folder 32: 10 Photos

- 221. Pilcher on float
- 222. Fiesta Bowl parade
- 223. Fiesta Bowl parade
- 224. Fiesta Bowl parade
- 225. Fiesta Bowl parade
- 226. Fiesta Bowl parade
- 227. Fiesta Bowl parade
- 228. Fiesta Bowl parade
- 229. Fiesta Bowl parade
- 230. Fiesta Bowl parade

Folder 33. 10 Photos

- 231. Fiesta Bowl parade
- 232. Fiesta Bowl parade
- 233. Fiesta Bowl parade
- 234. Pilcher talking to Handicapped Professional Woman of the Year
- 235. Pilcher talking to gathering
- 236. Pilcher talking to gathering
- 237. Pilcher working with Easter Seal Society
- 238. Gathering at Easter Seal Society
- 239. Pilcher works with Easter Seal Society
- 240. Pilcher's husband's vehicle

Folder 34. 10 Photos

- 241. Pilcher speaking to Rotary Club
- 242. Pilcher speaking
- 243. Pilcher and Mayor Terry Goddard
- 244. Pilcher seated with Miss Arizona and Goddard
- 245. Hall of Fame museum opening



- 246. Pilcher at booth at hall of Fame opening
- 247. Hall of Fame opening
- 248. Pilcher and man dressed like Uncle Sam
- 249. Hall of Fame opening
- 250. Pilcher at Hall of Fame opening

Box 3. Folder 35: 10 Photos

- 251. Pilcher & Gov. Evan Mecham
- 252. Flowers
- 253. Pilcher hugging Rex Allen Jr.
- 254. Rex Allen Jr. in 75th Az. Anniv. parade
- 255. Rex Allen & Miss Az.
- 256. 75th Anniv. Parade
- 257. Parade
- 258. Parade
- 259. Pilcher in 75th Az. Anniv. Parade
- 260. Dancers in parade

Folder 36 10 Photos

- 261. 75th Anniv. Parade
- 262. Parade
- 263. Parade
- 264. Pilcher in parade
- 265. Parade
- 266. Parade
- 267. Parade
- 268. 75th Anniv. Fireworks display
- 269. Fireworks display
- 270. Pilcher & another girl at Amigo Mobility Club

Folder 37: 10 Photos

- 271. Pilcher at Mobility Club
- 272. Pilcher at Mobility Club
- 273. Rodeo parade
- 274. Rodeo parade
- 275. Pilcher at Rodeo Parade
- 276. Pilcher at Rodeo parade
- 277. Rodeo of Rodeos
- 278. Rodeo of Rodeos 1987
- 279. Rodeo of Rodeos
- 280. Rodeo of Rodeos

Folder 38: 10 Photos

- 281. Rodeo of Rodeos parade
- 282. Rodeo parade

283. Rodeo parade
284. "Hello Phoenix" festival, 1987
285. Pilcher at St. Patricks parade
286. Pilcher at St. Patricks parade
287. Pilcher at parade
288. St. Pat's parade
289. Miss Wheelchair Az. pageant, 1987
290. Miss Wheelchair Az. pageant

Folder 39. 10 Photos

291. Pageant staffer
292. Pilcher and contestant
293. Dancers
294. Guests at table
295. Dancer hugging Pilcher
296. Pilcher's father? Seated a table
297. Pilcher at pageant
298. Pilcher at pageant
299. Pilcher getting makeup
300. Pilcher at pageant

Folder 40. 10 Photos

301. Pilcher at pageant
302. Pilcher applying eye shadow
303. Contestant posters
304. Contestants on stage
305. Contestants
306. Pilcher interviewed on stage
307. Pilcher interviewed on stage
308. Man & woman on pageant stage
309. Pilcher interviewed on stage
310. Contestant being interviewed

Folder 41: 10 Photos

311. Pilcher with stage dancers
312. Pageant speaker
313. Two contestants on stage
314. Pageant dancers
315. Pilcher with dancers
316. Pilcher with new pageant queen
317. Pilcher applauding new queen
318. Pilcher hugging new queen
319. New queen announcement
320. Pilcher and new queen

Folder 42: 11 Photos

- 321. 1987 pageant contestants
- 322. Pilcher waves goodbye
- 323. Pilcher on stage
- 324. Pilcher on stage
- 325. Pilcher meeting a man
- 326. Pilcher and new queen-Pilcher “showing leg”
- 327. Pilcher and family
- 328a. Pilcher shaking hands
- 328. Contestant and family
- 329. Contestant dancing
- 330. Pilcher and new queen

Folder 43: 11 Photos

- 331. Pilcher and new queen
- 332. Dining room scene
- 333. Pilcher in dining room
- 334. Pilcher in parade
- 335. Unidentified parade
- 336. Parade
- 337. Pilcher with group at table
- 338. John McCain seated, holding child
- 339. Ellen Pilcher portrait
- 340. Ellen Pilcher portrait
- 341. Ellen Pilcher portrait

Folder 44: Miscellaneous pamphlets, brochures, letters and news articles pertaining to Ellen Pilcher and her involvement with disability awareness and Miss Wheelchair Pageant.

Folder 45: More articles, brochures, etc. pertaining to Pilcher and the pageants.

Folder 46: Pilcher’s personal scrapbook, consisting of articles pertaining to the siege of polio in the 50’s, Pilcher’s personal involvement with the disease and advancements in caring for the disabled.

Folder 47: More articles from Pilcher’s personal scrapbook.

Box 4.

Folder 48: General correspondence

Folder 49: The poem “Me”, by Pilcher

Folders 50 through 55: The original manuscript of Helen Pilcher’s book, “I Can’t Let Them See Me Cry”.

Folder 56: Pilcher’s Master’s Thesis, completed August, 1973: “An Investigation of Opinions on First Impressions of a Disabled Person as Measured by the Semantic Differential.”

Folder 57: An article, "Aging with a Disability", written by Roberta B. Trieschmann, which contains a chapter on the life of Pilcher, referred to as "Lisa" in the article.

Folder 58: Momentos and articles about the Ms. Wheelchair Arizona pageant.

Folder 59: 1987 Pageant information.

Folder 60: Meritorious certificates awarded Pilcher

Folders 61 through 63: Extra Wheelchair Pageant Photos of contestants and Pilcher.

Box 5.

Item 384: Large color portrait of Pilcher, Ms. Wheelchair Arizona Pageant

Item 385: Large photo of Pilcher as a small child in leg braces.

Item 394: The original Pilcher Poster, used during the Pageant: "Disabled Does Not Mean Unable".