

Hot Pursuits

Enjoying pointed humor and the thrill of the dance

I knew I liked Jeanne Robertson from the get-go.

The comedian is a former beauty queen (just like me). She's tall (like moi). And she's funny (two out of three ain't bad).

We former beauty queens have a special kinship — we're legends in our own minds. No matter what happens in life, we know we'll always have the crown.

When I spoke to Robertson during a tour break, we quickly bonded over our pageant experiences.

Robertson won the Miss North Carolina crown in 1963 and went on to the Miss America pageant,



Cloe Cabrera
ccabrera@tampatrib.com

where she won Miss Congeniality. She was the tallest contestant in the pageant at 6 feet 2 inches — and she's proud of it.

In fact, it was back in her pageant days when she discovered that she could make people laugh.

Robertson often entertained the crowd while judges' scores were being tabulated.

"I just walked out and told stories about my

travels and being a former basketball player during the Miss America pageant, and people would laugh," said Robertson, calling from a tour stop in North Carolina.

At age 68, Robertson is a "viral" sensation on YouTube — her videos have more than 13 million hits — and she's a sought-after speaker at corporate meetings and conventions across the country.

"When we look for the humor around us, we can find it," said Robertson, in a thick Southern drawl. "I want to weave a story that makes people laugh their heads off, but I also want it to be a point to the story. I want people to say, 'the same thing happened

to me' when they leave my show."

Robertson brings her "Comedy with Class" tour to Tampa at 8 p.m. Nov. 4 at the David A. Straz Center. Tickets are \$34.50 and can be purchased at the Straz Center Box Office, www.jeannerobertson.com or (813) 229-7827.

Night creatures calling

First, there's the shoulder twitch. Then, a little head bobbing, overhead clapping and some shuffling. Oh, and a lot of spinning and booty shakin'.

Many of us who grew up in the '80s know every step of the most-famous synchronized zombie dance (not that there's a lot of competition): Michael Jackson's "Thriller."

And tomorrow, folks will try to create the largest simultaneous dance of the King of Pop's iconic song at "Thrill St. Pete."

In 2009, 22,571 people in 264 cities from 33 countries danced "Thriller" at the same time, setting a record.

The event will take place at 10 p.m. Saturday at The Pier in St. Petersburg. And there's still time to learn the moves. Go to the Thrill the World website (www.thrilltheworld.com) and start practicing.

Gourds and more

Last weekend, a friend and I headed north for the annual McIntosh 1890s Festival.

Perfect fall weather, the smell of kettle corn in the



JEANNE ROBERTSON

Jeanne Robertson brings her "Comedy with Class" tour to the Straz Center on Nov. 4

air and booth after booth of country crafts made for a wonderful day of browsing and noshing.

This being my first trip to this quaint burg just south of Gainesville, I didn't know what to expect. Who knew all the decorative uses of gourds?

Painted gourd ornaments, whimsical gourd planters, Santa Claus gourds and other objects d'gourd beckoned, but we didn't buy. There also were picture frames made from tree bark and moss, redneck wine glasses (Mason jars on top of candlesticks) and lots of swings and patio furniture made from Florida cypress.

"If you can't find something to buy here, you're just not looking," said one

shopper who travels to the festival every year from Georgia.

The festival was so charming, we didn't have the heart to correct a jewelry vendor selling Cubirk Zircornia.

If you want to get a taste of Old Florida, it's not too late. The Micanopy Fall Harvest Festival gets under way this weekend, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday in Micanopy (exit 374 off Interstate 75, just south of Gainesville).

Go to micafest@micanopyfallfestival.org for more information.

See you around town!

Cloe Cabrera can be reached at (813) 259-7656 or ccabrera@tampatrib.com



THRILL ST. PETE

Zombie-clad dancers will perform Michael Jackson's "Thriller" dance Saturday in St. Petersburg. They hope to create the largest simultaneous dance of the iconic song.