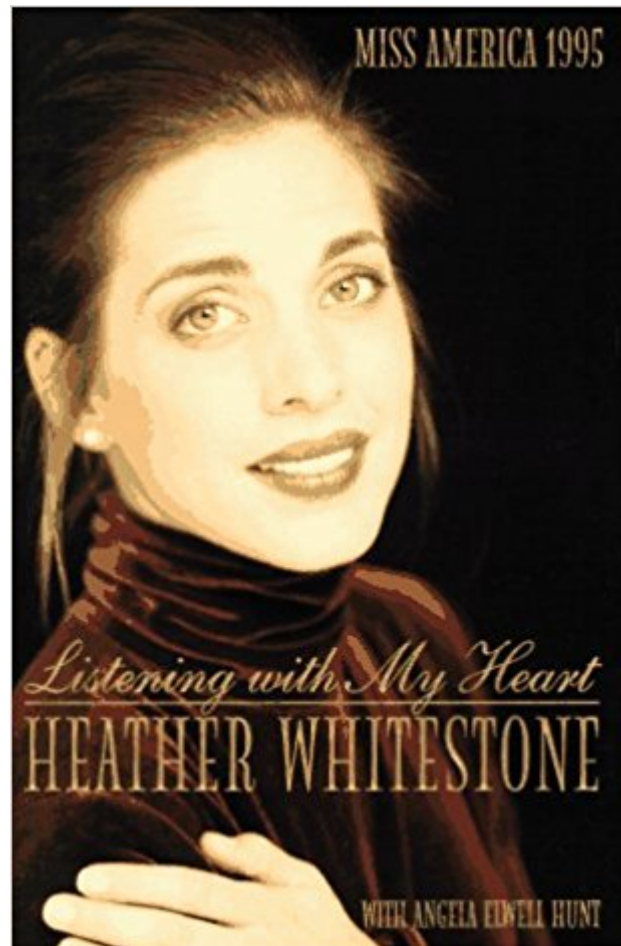




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# Listening With My Heart



## Synopsis

Heather Whitestone. That name has become synonymous with great adversity, incredible determination and unprecedented achievement. In *Listening With My Heart*, Heather tells her own story and the stories of others who have inspired her, proving that no obstacle is too big and that with hard work, perseverance, and faith, each of us can move mountains. Profoundly deaf since she was a year old, Heather struggled against the odds to live a normal life. Ironically, though, because of her deafness she never heard the voices of discouragement that many of us so often hear. She never heard the doctor tell her family that she wouldn't develop beyond third grade abilities, she never heard the voices of those who said she would never dance ballet, or even speak. She did, however, hear the encouraging spirit of her family, and she brought herself along to become Miss America in 1995. Though disabled, her incredible gifts have inspired many throughout the world, and in *Listening With My Heart* she shares her life-changing wisdom to others that with strength and faith, anything is possible.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

YA. The first Miss America with a disability tells her life story in a readable, engaging manner. Although profoundly deaf since the age of 18 months, Whitestone let little stand in her way to achieving her goals: to dance, to compete in pageants, to encourage others, and always to praise God. YAs will be interested in the steps involved in the various competitions that lead up to the Miss America competition, and her pageant platform, STARS (Success Through Action and Realization of your dreamS). After Whitestone won, she became the focus of controversy because she wears a

hearing aid, uses oral speech, and occasionally signs in Signing Exact English. Her critics in the deaf community believe that she should communicate through American Sign Language. The controversy continues. The author describes her Miss America year, with the endless demands on her time and energy, the complete lack of privacy, and the times when she was so exhausted that she felt she could not keep going. What has always sustained her is her positive attitude, and her absolute faith in God. This inspirational biography will have wide appeal. Judy Sokoll, formerly at Fairfax County Public Library, VA Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Although Heather Whitestone will be forever known as the first Miss America with a disability, she would probably prefer to be remembered as a young woman whose deafness taught her discipline and unwavering belief in God. In this sometimes saccharine memoir, *Miss America 1995* recounts the story of her inspiring life, beginning with a childhood fever that left her profoundly deaf. That impairment would, in turn, leave her fiercely independent and strong willed. Whitestone, who chose hearing aids over signing, attended ballet classes to improve her speech rhythms and fell in love with dance. Her faith in God's dream for her was reflected in the positive way in which she built on her strengths and accepted her limitations in school, in community service, and in beauty pageants. The book leaves readers with a picture of the new Mrs. John McCallum who, if she could hear for one day, admits she would spend it on the beach listening to her husband's "precious voice."

Patricia Hassler

I love this book! The first reason I would recommend this book is because of the determination and ambition shown through Heather's inspirational message. For example, Heather did not let her deafness overcome her main goal, though kids from school constantly bullied and discouraged her. When Heather was told that she would not be able to speak, nor get an education beyond third grade, she fought harder every day to become better as she stated, "I was always working hard, and striving to keep up." The first portion of the book also talks about Heather's childhood which includes her deadly sickness that led her to being deaf at 18 months old. Heather includes the troubles she had as a child as she indicated, "Schoolwork was difficult and extremely time-consuming. I was a slow reader, and had to especially concentrate on English grammar" (12), which exemplifies one of her most difficult times as a child. Not only does Heather show determination to work harder, but she reminds the audience that a long term goal takes hard work and strength.

I've always been a fan of the Miss America Pageant ever since I started watching it with my family when I was a little girl. So I was most interested to read Heather Whitestone's story, our first deaf Miss America. The story consists primarily of two parts--her life before she won the Miss America title and the year of her reign. If you're hoping for her to go behind the scenes of the pageant itself, there is next to no information about this. But she does dispel some of the glamour that surrounds the pageant--if you're thinking that Miss America lives in the lap of luxury for a year, think again. As Heather tells us, although she flew first-class and stayed in beautiful hotel suites, she was working a long, hectic schedule with hardly any days off. She soon learns about the downside to being a celebrity when not even the restroom is a sanctuary. I loved the personal stories. I loved it when she got real and told us about how life in a pressure cooker made her a cranky young woman at times. I loved the fact that it's a Cinderella story in a way because her knight in shining armor in the person of a young man working in the political arena in Washington meets her. Despite the fact that I am a Christian, there was maybe just a wee too much preachiness for me, and for non-believers or non-Christians, it could be just a little much. Don't get me wrong--she seems like a lovely person. She's very sincere. I liked the fact that she admitted that she was so tired from her schedule as Miss America that she didn't find time for prayer or the Bible. I love honesty. I hate it when people pretend to be perfect. I was interested to hear about the conflicts between her and the deaf community. I never knew that speaking, and not signing, would be a problem. It's not just the preachiness, though; I guess the devil is in the details--so many organizations that had to be mentioned--I would read whole paragraphs that I have to admit just weren't very interesting to me. So maybe this is my problem. But I really enjoyed hearing about Heather's early life--about the fact that she had some of the problems that many people have--her parents' divorce, siblings that grew apart from her, and learning problems as the result of her handicap. And I think this is the first time that I have read in detail about the pressures of life as Miss America and it was eye-opening to me. I am so happy that she was able to give hope to many deaf people, especially children, and parents of deaf children. She's an admirable woman and it's a good book.

Struggling to come up with title for this review shouldn't have happened, for "refreshing" describes this enjoyable read. Heather is an honest, open and Christian person. Her humility to share her fears, exasperations, even private darker moments is refreshing! And then there is her deafness. She is honest and open here as well, lamenting at times the deaf culture, but also showing sensitivity to their plight. I'm a page-bender, underliner, note-taker kind of reader who continually marks passages in the great reads that I have, and this book has so many of them. I wanted to

communicate them in this review, but will choose to just give some salient phrases from them so that you'll read this marvelous book: "going to bed means getting some sleep

I'm taking an ASL class and was researching rhythm & deafness. I remembered Heather winning Miss America with her beautiful Ballet performance and decided to order her book. Very inspiring and uplifting. Gave to my daughter and daughters in law to read. All loved it.

I loved this story! It was very inspiring. I like stories about overcoming the odds & anything about deaf culture is fascinating to me

Great Book

really good book. only thing not perfect is the quality of the pictures in the softcover version. Otherwise great.

I am the wife of this account ..It will say Jeff which is my husband.I read the 1st book that Heathers mom wrote right after Miss America pageant. I was so moved and inspired by the family and Heather.Heather is a mentor to me. She gave me insight and a definite relation to how that we hearing impaired and deaf people cope in our everyday lives. I was born with nerve deafness and my hearing has gotten worse. This past year I was a candidate for the cochlear implant. I had the surgery. Doing marvelous!!! I still wear a hearing aid in my other ear. I thought about Heather. My understanding was that she had the cochlear implant also after her child was born? . I hope to find out in this book. I am excited and rejoicing as I wait for my copy . .To everyone who is looking for a real inspiration. ... READ

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