

NORTHERN INDIANA

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MAGAZINE

COVER STORY: JILL DOBSON

BIG DREAMS SMALL TOWN

BY STEVEN DOUGLAS LOSEY

The population of Quincy, Michigan is 1,594; Jill Dobson was one of them. In the early nineties, Jill was a high school student, yearning and dreaming of journalism—of interviewing famous people and pursuing a life in media.

She began to live her passions each day, working for the high school newspaper and preparing for the challenges that dreams demand.

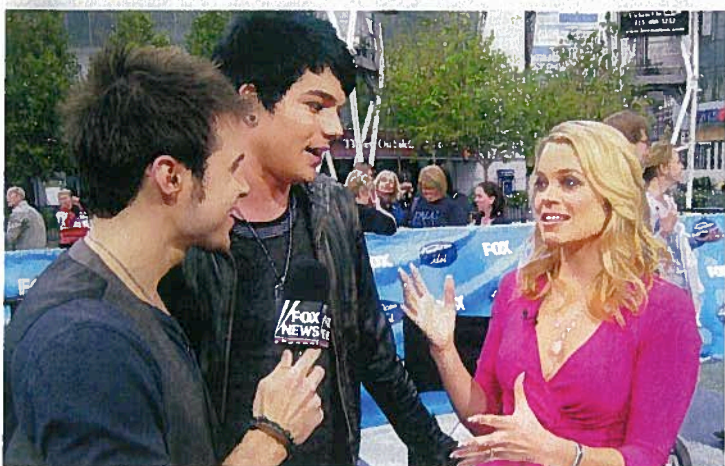
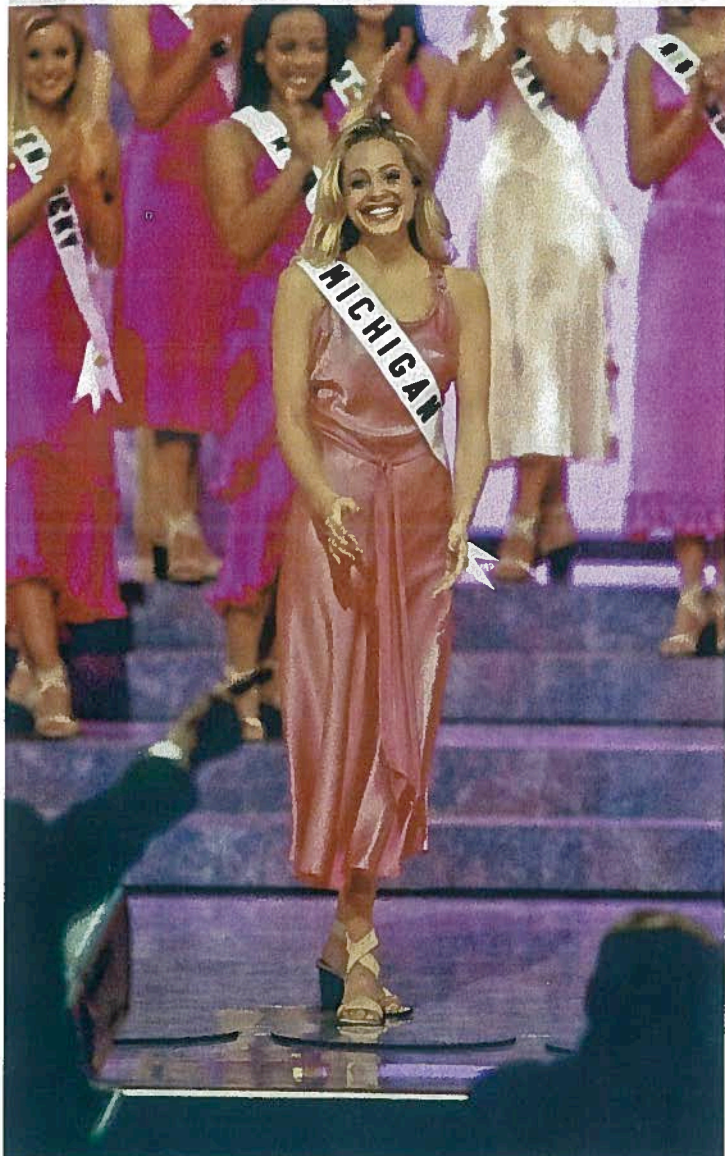
Her endeavors earned her an internship with the Fox News Channel and on-air in Lansing, Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo. This internship eventually led to a cool gig with Fox as their Entertainment Correspondent, based in New York City.

Dobson is a former Miss Michigan and Miss USA finalist. Her vast experience has afforded her interviews with hundreds of celebrities. She has appeared as a guest on "Hannity," "The O'Reilly Factor," and "Fox and Friends."

Dobson is thrilled to live her dreams daily. She's real. She's down-to-earth. She's just what you'd expect from a small-town girl.

AT RIGHT: An exuberant Jill Dobson, hosting her show "Strategy Room" for FoxNews.com.





ABOVE: LAKES Country's own Jill Dobson was crowned Miss Michigan USA 2000. Shown here, Dobson is further chosen among the top ten at Miss USA 2000.

BELOW: Dobson interviews American Idol champ, Kris Allen, and Idol runner-up, Adam Lambert, at the American Idol Finale.

You're a small town girl, right?

I sure am. It was a long road from Quincy, Michigan to New York City working for the number one cable channel in the nation, but it was a great road, as well. I've always had an interest in journalism and worked at the school paper at Quincy High School, then studied journalism in college and grad school.

How did you become the entertainment correspondent for Fox News Channel?

I interned at the Fox News Channel in the fall of 2001. I was in New York and really met a lot of different people. I was also [in New York] during 9/11 and experienced that tragic event first-hand. I learned a lot, and it felt like I really hit the ground running. After I interned at Fox, I returned to Michigan and worked on-air at WLNS in Lansing, a CBS affiliate and then WWFT for Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo. I kept working different jobs and eventually made it back to New York and on-air at Fox News Channel. I really feel like I've come full circle, coming back to where I interned and being on-air here. It's a dream come true.

What small town values have you taken to New York City? One of the things that most prepared me for a career in the public eye on television was the fact that you're never anonymous in a small town like Quincy! If you're rude to someone, they're going to be the sister of your Sunday school teacher. [Laughs.] I learned early on to be nice to people and, of course, that's easy in a small town and community that's always been extremely supportive of me and the young people in general. There are good schools and great people. I was on the track and cross country teams, involved in the school newspaper and all sorts of other activities. I absolutely loved growing up there.

Quincy has some great lakes?

I grew up on a farm; our backyard was literally a cornfield. My dad farmed corn and soybeans, and my mom was a teacher at our elementary school. I was always jealous of the kids who lived on the lake. In Quincy, we have Marble Lake and some of my friends had homes there. It was great fun to go to their houses. When I was in middle school, my parents bought a small boat so we would go out on the weekends and enjoy the chain of lakes. That's when I learned to ski; I was always looking for an excuse to get off the farm, and that was it. The funny part is that the ultimate way to get off the farm was moving to New York City.

How often do you return to Michigan?

As often as I can. You can always find me back around Mother's Day because that's also around my mom's birthday. It seems like there's always a family wedding, reunion or graduation. I usually make it back in the summer and that's a great time to enjoy the lakes.

You were also Miss Michigan?

I competed in Miss Michigan USA and won in 2000. That was a great time to be able to travel around Michigan and speak to people. There were so many opportunities from that. I host an online talk show called "Strategy Room." I'm constantly talking about Michigan; it's actually a running joke amongst my viewers.

What are some memorable moments in your career?

I'm the Entertainment Correspondent for the Fox News Channel so I always say I have the best job in the building. I get to go to the Oscars and the Emmys and attend the American Idol finale—and all the cool things I was always interested in and watching on television when I was a kid. One of my personal highlights was interviewing a fellow Michigander: Madonna. She's always been one of the biggest stars on the planet. It was incredible to sit down with her for the interview. I remember thinking to myself how cool it would be to go back and tell my ten-year-old self that I would one day be talking with this superstar. It was an amazing moment.

You attend a lot of huge events as well?

The Oscars is always huge; I've attended that a few times now and really enjoy it. Being at the industry's premier event was huge for me, knowing that I aspired to be an entertainment reporter all my life. Getting to interview people like George Clooney and Penelope Cruz is amazing as well.

Don't you also cover American Idol?

This past May I attended the finale. Generally, I stand outside the event and talk to the stars, but I actually had time to run in and sit in the audience this time, experiencing it first-hand. Afterwards, I interviewed the winner, Kris Allen, and the runner-up, Adam Lambert, live on Fox News Channel. I thought, *This is a good day at work!*

You're married, right?

I've been married for three-and-a-half years. My husband is Jim Ornstein; he's an agent at the William Morris agency. I always say I owe a lot to Fox News Channel. Not only did I intern and start my career here, but now I'm on-air with a fantastic job—and I met my husband through Fox. John Gibson is one of the anchors here and he suggested I meet with an agent at William Morris. John Gibson's agent pawned me off to the young new guy at the office because no one wants to meet with an intern. Jim Ornstein got stuck meeting with me. [Laughs.] He told his colleague, "I'll give her five minutes." He wasn't thrilled at having to meet with me, but the meeting went well and the rest is history.

Is he your agent now?

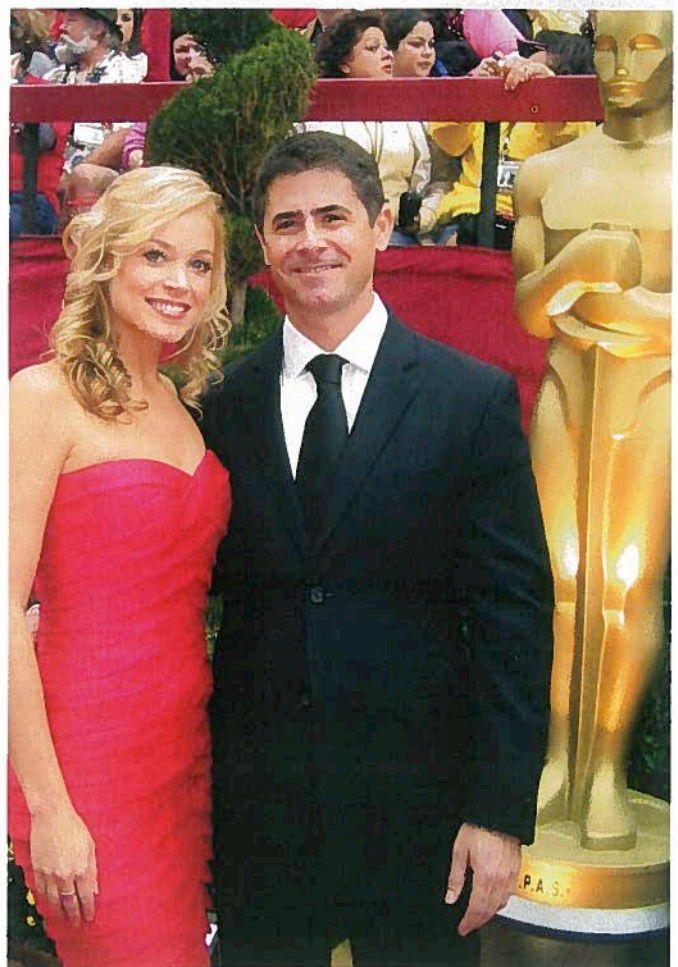
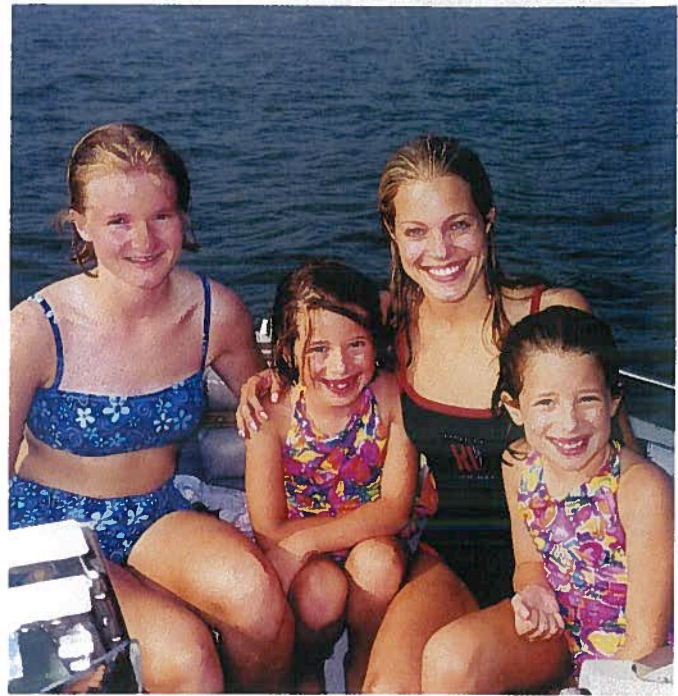
Everyone tends to ask me that question, but I'm actually not a William Morris client.

I hear your hobby involves celebrities as well.

I enjoy celebrity spotting, both as my career and as my hobby. Whenever there's a big event, I always want to go to a celebrity "hot-spot" to see who I can get a close-up look at. There's a place called the Waverly Inn in New York City where there are always celebrities. The last time I went, Reese Witherspoon and Jake Gyllenhaal were at the next table. And Oliver Stone was there with Michael Douglas.

What does Valentine's Day mean to you?

My key for enjoying Valentine's Day is going to dinner on February 13, because it's not as crowded. Also, then there's a regular menu and we don't need reservations. On the 14th we stay home and cook a lovely dinner—and by cooking a lovely dinner I mean I order us a pizza! That's my Valentine's tradition. 🍕



ABOVE: Lake lovin' fun with family! Dobson enjoys a day at the lake with her nieces.

BELOW: The lovely Dobson with her husband, Jim Ornstein, at the Academy Awards, 2008.

