

11-1-05 Around the Globe and Back Again (Courtesy North Greenville College Magazine)

An "amazing race" allowed McCorkle the chance to see the world and help at home.

One wrong turn may have cost 2001 NGC graduate Kelly McCorkle and her teammate Ron Young \$1 million, but the experience is one that McCorkle wouldn't trade for anything.

On the final leg of CBS' The Amazing Race 7, McCorkle, a former Miss South Carolina, and Young, a former POW in the Iraq war, missed the exit for an airport in Puerto Rico costing them a spot on a plane that held the eventual winners of the CBS reality television show, Uchenna and Joyce Agu. "We were only minutes behind them," said McCorkle, "but that flight made the difference."

Despite losing the race and having her relationship with Young, whom she describes now as simply "a good friend," take center stage, the upstate South Carolina native feels it was all worth it. "I am so thankful for the opportunity to have participated in the The Amazing Race. I didn't win \$1 million, but I won. I have new friends, amazing life experiences; God revealed so much to me during this race."

McCorkle has no regrets about how the show went (except maybe that wrong turn in Puerto Rico), she only wishes she could have been part of the editing of the show.

"They [CBS] did a good job showing the personalities of all the individuals involved. I just felt like they concentrated too much on Ron and I arguing, especially when we saw some of the other couples arguing as much or more than we did," said McCorkle.

She hopes that people understand what all is involved in the making of the show. "What you see is not necessarily the whole truth," said McCorkle. She felt like some of her statements were taken out of context, with one giving the appearance that she did not appreciate the sacrifice of the military and specifically POWs, such as Young.

"That comment came out wrong, but it was so insignificant that Ron and I didn't even remember it until we saw the show," said McCorkle.

"Ron knows I have respect for him and what he did."

Difficulties in the editing process aside, McCorkle, a member of Taylors First Baptist Church, credits her faith for allowing her to make it through tough times. "Just before I left for the race, my best friend [former Miss Williamston, Leslie Ann Mazzara] was murdered

and I had a cousin to die. During the race, my relationship with Ron was put in front of the world. Because of going through all those emotional things and still finishing in the top three, I found out I am stronger than I thought," said McCorkle. "Before I left I prayed and felt like God wanted me to go. When things got tough, I would ust go to the Word and God got me through."

After the show, Kelly helped to organize a fundraiser in honor or Mazzara. "The Rai\$ing Race" was a smaller version of The Amazing Race, with contestants racing to win a Caribbean cruise.

All the proceeds from the race went toward building a cottage at the Calvary Home for Children in Anderson, SC which will be named after Mazzara.

McCorkle's goal for the event was to raise at least \$25,000. To help meet that goal, McCorkle enlisted the help of several teams and individuals from The Amazing Race 7, including the Agus and celebrity couple Rob Mariano and Amber Brkich, who were also contestants on Survivor and recently had their wedding broadcast by CBS. All total, \$65,000 was raised for the children's home.

So far God has taken McCorkle from a little girl with a learning disability to the Miss America Pageant, around the world and now back home to help others and honor a friend. As long as she avoids the wrong turns, who knows where she may end up.

Kelley McCorkle, Miss SC 2002 interviews with North Greenville College Magazine, published 11-1-05