

THE GOVERNOR'S CALL GIRL

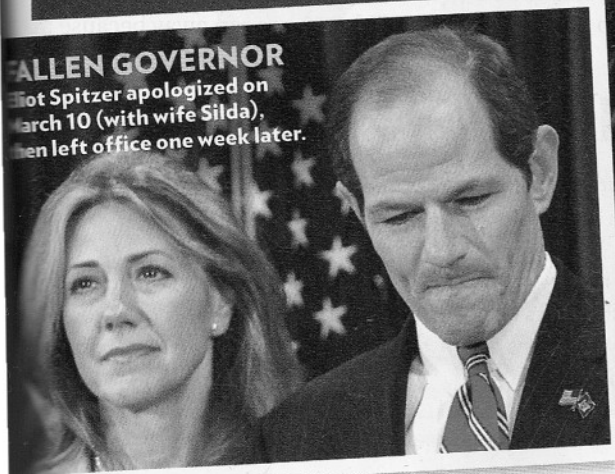
As a schoolgirl Ashley Dupré dreamed of fame; as Eliot Spitzer's pricey evening visitor, she got notoriety

Long before she crashed into the public spotlight as "Kristen," the full-figured, four-figure-an-hour call girl who unwittingly helped to bring down New York Governor Eliot Spitzer, Ashley Youmans was a tomboyish New Jersey girl who loved to dance to Madonna and sing Brandy songs on her karaoke machine. "We tried to build clubhouses in her backyard," says a former neighbor from Wall Township, N.J. En route to her high-flying life in New York City, Ashley, now 22, tried on different names (Ashley DiPietro, Ashley Alexandra Dupré) and different careers (waitressing, modeling, hooking) but never seemed to lose sight of her overriding goal: to sing.



FALLEN GOVERNOR

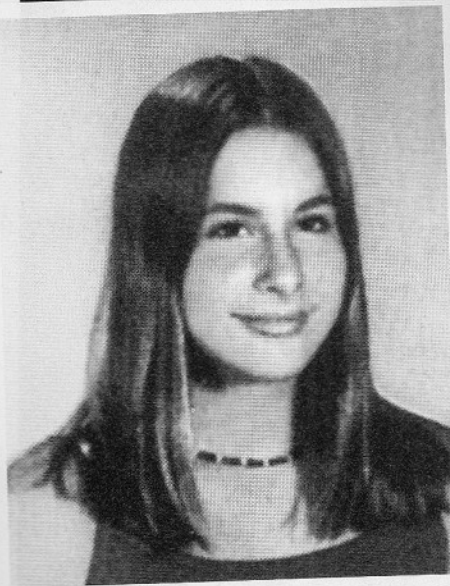
Eliot Spitzer apologized on March 10 (with wife Silda), then left office one week later.



"She didn't sound upset," says a friend who received post-scandal phone messages from Ashley Dupré (in '07).

QUIETER TIMES

Dupré (in her '99 yearbook photo) "was fun, funny, very outgoing," says a former New Jersey neighbor.



HOT FUN

Dupré posted this snapshot on her MySpace page.



She will have opportunity to do plenty of that in coming months. In the wake of Spitzer's sudden resignation, Dupré, as she is now known, will likely be granted immunity by federal prosecutors to testify in the international prostitution sting that ensnared him. Spitzer, 48, has remained in seclusion, his reputation and possibly his marriage (see box, page 77) in ruins. On March 17 his deputy and successor, David Paterson, 53, was sworn at the state capitol in Albany, becoming the state's first African American and legally blind governor. He quickly found himself caught up in a brouhaha over infidelities committed years ago when his marriage (since rescued) was on the rocks.

Dupré, meanwhile, faded from sight after *The New York Times* identified her as Kristen. "I told her, 'That's the first step, you know?'" says Joe Pawlak, a high school friend who remains in touch with her. Dupré's early years were spent in the modest New Jersey shore community of Beachwood with her older brother Kyle and parents, William Youmans, a stonemason, and Carolyn Capalbo. "Ashley says they were poor," says a longtime friend. After her parents split up, Dupré moved in 1992 to tony Wall Town-

“ Show me some love. Sex, money, drugs is what I'm all about” —LYRICS FROM DUPRE'S SONG “MOVE YA BODY”

ship, where her mother married oral surgeon Michael DiPietro. Now she lived in a spacious stone house and was driven to school in a Jaguar. "Once she found what it was like to have money," says this friend, "she never wanted to be poor again."

But all wasn't perfect. "She used to talk about how much she missed her dad," says Erica Kane, a childhood pal. As Ashley moved into her teens,

there was new heartache. Kyle, now 26, was incarcerated following a 2000 drug arrest. And while Dupré was a hit with boys, she had trouble with her own gender. "Girls were jealous of her," says Kane. "She was one of the hot girls." How hot? "All the guys thought she was the best-looking girl," says Shaun Keegan, 21, who was friends with Dupré from 6th through 10th grade. "She wanted to be famous; she wanted to get out of Wall."

During her sophomore year at Wall High School, Dupré abruptly decamped to her father's home in Kill Devil Hills on the Outer Banks of North Carolina, offering her friends no explanation. Her mother told *The New York Times*, "She was a young kid with typical teenage rebellion issues." The longtime friend says, "I know she ran away because at

ASHLEY IN THE SPOTLIGHT

- *Hustler* has offered Dupré \$1 million to pose. She has not yet responded.
- At AmieStreet.com, a music download site where she posts her music, Dupré had only 61 listens prior to Spitzer's downfall. That number has climbed to more than 440,000. The price per song is 98 cents, the site's top rate.
- Two days after the Spitzer scandal broke, Dupré had 104,000 hits on her MySpace page; a week later the count was close to 9.5 million.

the time there were cops showing up at my house saying, 'You're the last person she talked to. Where is she?'"

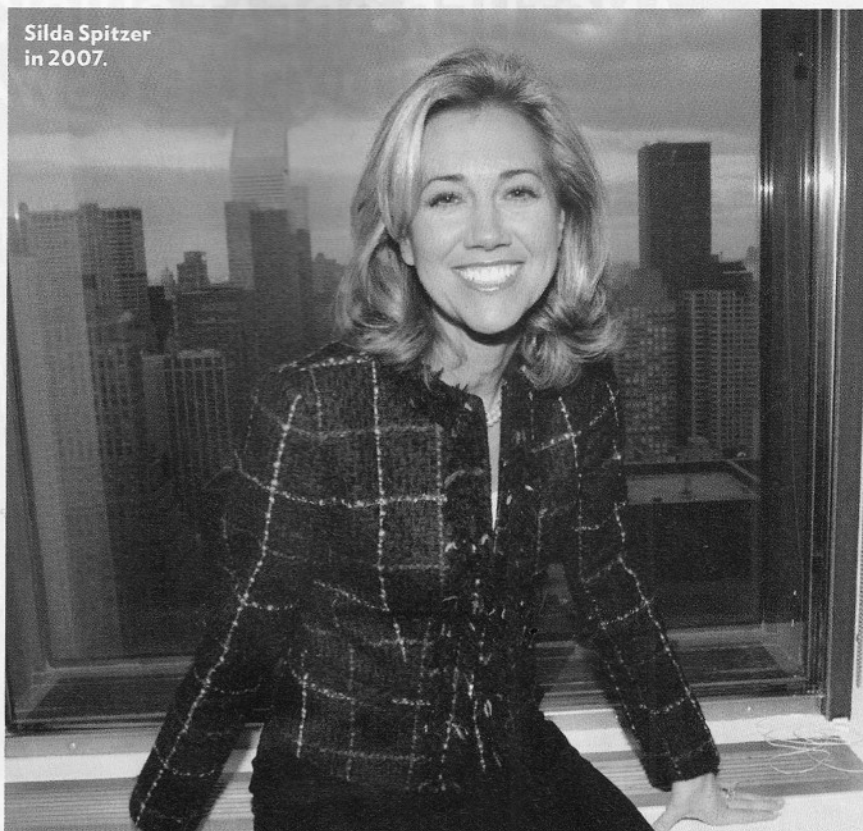
At her new school, Manteo High, Dupré adopted a lower profile. "She was so quiet and shy," says Kelsey Hunter, 20. "She wasn't one of those girls who would hook up with different guys." She was, however, one of those girls who shed her clothes for a *Girls Gone Wild* video during a spring-break trip to Florida, according to company founder Joe Francis. One boyfriend, Wayne Hunter, says Ashley was the target of rumors. "The girls around here were just brutal to her," he says. "That's why she left: She wanted to go to New York and start over."

After a year Dupré made her way to Manhattan, dreaming of a career in music. To pay her bills, she waitressed at hot spots like Pink Elephant and Retox, where she partied with hardcore rocker types. "She wasn't an angel; she liked to drink," says a former colleague. "The old, rich guys loved her. She knew how to work them." When she began driving a Mercedes and obviously "had her boobs done," says the longtime friend, "she said she was working in real estate." With another Wall friend, Ashley was less coy. "She said she was a call girl," says Michael Zelenak, 25, who's been friends with her since elementary school and dated her briefly in high school. "She didn't think of it as a bad thing."

In her free time Ashley sang in clubs and recorded demos. The first song that she posted on AmieStreet.com went largely unnoticed—until the Spitzer scandal broke. Since then she has added a hip-hoppish second tune, "Move Ya Body." Sample lyric: "Sex, money, drugs is what I'm all about." Popular radio station Z100 in New York City put her music on the air—then pulled it off the air less than 24 hours later. Why? Listeners didn't like it.

Jill Smolowe and Sandra Sobieraj Westfall, Charlotte Triggs, Champ Clark, Diane Herbst, Tiffany McGee, Sean Scully, Alyssa Shelasky, Sharon Cotliar, Diane Clehane, Wendy Grossman and Michelle York

Silda Spitzer
in 2007.



THE GOVERNOR'S WIFE: STILL LOYAL—FOR NOW

When the nation watched and wondered—How *could* she stand by his side?—one observer saw something more tragic in New York Gov. Eliot Spitzer's sudden fall and the public humiliation of his wife, Silda. "It wasn't just the loss of the marriage and the unfaithfulness but the loss of the future they invested in," says Janet Ward Black, a friend of Silda's since high school in Concord, N.C. "People really believed the White House was in store for them."

And now? Seclusion. Silence. Since her husband announced his resignation on March 12, Silda, 50, has holed up in the family's Fifth Avenue apartment or at their weekend home in Gallatin, N.Y. The Harvard-educated lawyer is taking a "thoughtful approach," says one

friend. Another comments, "I hear she's giving [Eliot] time to get himself together and clear out."

No one who knew Silda Wall as a girl in North Carolina could have predicted such a mess. A cheerleader, band member and senior class officer, she was "just the all-American girl," says Jeff Burris, 50, her first-grade "boyfriend." These days Silda has three teenage daughters, ages 18, 15 and 13, to tend to. The oldest, Elyssa, is awaiting word on college acceptances. Don't expect Silda to stay quiet forever. As friend Lina Gibson points out, Silda, a passionate public-policy advocate, has talents all her own. "She doesn't need to be Eliot's First Lady. She can make it to the White House on her own," says Gibson. "Wouldn't that be justice?"