

The Postcard That Changed My Life

by Kyra Walters

The postcard arrived on a cloudy winter day. It was almost my birthday, so I was checking the mailbox for birthday greetings from my grandparents, not a boring little postcard. But the colors were so bright and cheery and the girls in the photo looked so happy, that I couldn't help but be curious. "Catch the Excitement!" it said. There was going to be a National American Miss pageant in Oregon, and one of my friends had recommended me. Even more curious, I asked my parents if I could go. They said, "yes" and before you know it, it was time for the pageant.

As I arrived at the hotel, my heart started to pound. I had performed in plays, films and commercials before, but I was always pretending to be someone else. Being judged for being me was much scarier. What if the other girls didn't like me? What if I messed up my talent or my speech? What if I tripped over my gown on stage? "It's okay," my mom insisted. "Just try to do your best and have fun!" So, I dressed up in my cowgirl costume and went to the get-to-know-you party. The other girls were so nice! I had a big grin splattered across my face for the rest of the evening.

The next day was the talent contest. When my name was called, my heart started pumping. My mom and I set up my harp on stage and I sat down and began to play and sing. When I was done, I tingled and adrenaline rushed through my body. What a new sensation! I felt really confident! I had just done really well, and got a large applause. I grinned again.

Next were the casual wear, actress, and spokesmodel contests. With each event, I could feel my confidence grow. In my formal wear gown, I was no longer worried about tripping and I really enjoyed walking across the stage with my dad. By the time I gave my personal introduction, I was able to use the confidence I had gathered over the course of the day and I did great. My grin was starting to make my cheeks hurt!

Then came the biggest surprise of all. The first trophy handed out that night was for Miss Personality 1st Runner Up and my name was called! Not only did I like the other girls, but that award meant they really liked me too! Then my name was called for Actress 4th runner-up, Talent 3rd runner-up, Spokesmodel 1st runner-up, and I won Miss Photogenic! I was also selected as one of the top 15 finalists. My grin and I went home that evening with my feelings of confidence up to the brim.

National American Miss has made an unbelievable difference in my life. My confidence has immensely grown. I have wonderful memories and several new friends. And a really big grin. I'm so glad I got that postcard!