

girls; but in the back of your mind you always remember it's a competition and there can only be one winner.

A typical day was waking up around 5-5:30 a.m. to get ready for the day; that means full hair and makeup, have breakfast, go to rehearsals and learn our dance numbers, walking patterns, or the layout of the show, then have lunch. After lunch we would have more rehearsal, and then get ready for an event that night, which usually lasted until 10 p.m. There were many fun events such as pool parties, karaoke at Sushi Sumba, a Barry Manilow concert, and a Mother's Day Brunch at The Palms.

There is also some not as fun like getting up at 4:30 a.m. to be ready for a swimsuit shoot at 6:00 a.m. and standing around for hours in the cold morning because the light is better for the photo. I also gave radio and TV interviews about our Fadil photos. There were many other fun and exciting things that all 51 contestants got to partake in, but I was lucky enough to be showcased in some online videos along with other selected contestants. If you go to the Miss USA Web site and select videos, you can watch some of the videos I was in.

Just because the day came to a wrap didn't mean I was done. I still had to workout to maintain my physical fitness; however we weren't allowed to leave our floor. That meant we had to do all our working out in the hallway of our floor. It was quite comical see ladies sprinting up and down the halls, since we were under supervision. I feel like I was a little kid again, where I couldn't go anywhere by myself, even to the bathroom.

May 16 came faster than we all thought. We had a dress rehearsal in the morning. This was run just like the show that night and I was lucky enough to be called to the top 15 and ended up third runner-up. Then it was time to meet the one and only Donald Trump. This wasn't the typical meet and greet that you would think of. First all 51 contestants introduced themselves by saying

our name and state in front of Mr. Trump and other Miss USA organization members. Then we all had to line up in a semi-circle and he would take a closer look at us as well as taking notes. Next, we were off to hair and make-up to get ready for the show, which by the end of the show someone's life would change forever. We all dreamed of this moment, but never knew what it was actually going to feel like.

It's funny when you think about it: since I won my title, I prepared for almost seven months for a two hour show that would determine whether I made the top 15 or not. I will say I was a little disappointed when I didn't hear my name called from Curtis Stone or Natalie Morales; but I wasn't the only one. There were 35 other contestants left standing in the background that were also heartbroken. This was the first time I felt like I had failed and let down the state of South Dakota, my family and friends.

Even though I didn't place, I still have the honor to fulfill my reign as Miss South Dakota USA. I plan to visit hospitals, and special community events until I give up my crown in October. As my family and I drove home from Vegas I had a lot of time to do some reflecting and a lot of sleeping.

Even though I didn't win Miss USA as I had hoped, I know that God has another plan for me and I am really excited to see what lies ahead. I will take what I have learned through this experience and apply it to my life. My plan is to graduate from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and move to Los Angeles in December to start my dreams of going to the New York Film Academy and becoming a professional dancer.

I can't begin to express my thanks and gratitude to everyone who helped me on my road to Miss USA. My dream truly wouldn't have been possible without your love, thoughts and support.

■ by Emily Ann Miller, Miss South Dakota USA



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