Meet the New Miss Virginia

June 30, 2008 By Shawn Decker

Every year, Gwenn and I travel to Roanoke to witness the crowning of Commonwealth royalty at the Miss Virginia pageant.

Miss Virginia is part of the Miss America system. It's a scholarship program. Of course that much is true, but in reality it is a series of competitions (swimsuit, evening gown, interview and talent) to gauge the overall awesomeness of a gal.

We have a lot of friends who are involved in this world as well, and the last weekend of June in Roanoke is a family reunion of sorts- we all dork out, argue, and drink to these brave souls who put it all on the line for the crown.

This year, Miss Arlington, Tara Wheeler was crowned Miss Virginia. Here she is on Tuesday (photo by Julius Tolentino), wearing a vintage dress from 1950's that I bought for Gwenn... Tara is wearing Gwenn's dress because, in the world of pageants, the smart contestants beg, borrow, and steal so they can actually use the money they get from competing for their schooling.

Here are a few of my favorite moments from this year's pageant...

Aside from wardrobe choices, production choices are also up for debate at Miss Virginia week. For

instance, during evening gown competition, little “princesses” greet the contestants and hand them a rose. Sweet, right?

Well, at Miss Virginia 2006, there was great controversy when eventual winner Adrianna Sgarlata hugged her Tiny Miss as she took her rose. Gwenn and I reviewed this on TiVo in slow motion, and proof that Adriana initiated this cuddle is still inconclusive. Two years ago, contestants were forbidden to hug the girls. This year, it was a free-for-all, and the first contestant to issue a hug was eventual winner, Tara Wheeler.

Some girls had more than one Princess to contend with, and here, Miss Williamsburg Brittany Gordon, proves she is up to the task.

A lot of people think the life of a Miss Virginia is glamorous. The outgoing Miss Virginia, Hannah Keifer, can tell you otherwise. For if you win, people will undoubtedly force you to wear something that is beyond the realm of good taste. Like this dress, the impact of which was magnified by the singing of “God Bless the U.S.A.”.

I’m still recovering from the excitement of Miss Virginia 2008. But if you want to read the insights of someone who actually competed this year, stop by Laura Pennington’s blog. Give her a few days, though, because as of yet Laura hasn’t posted anything about the pageant. My guess is that she too is still recovering from Miss Virginia week.

Positively Yours,

Shawn

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