

The NEW BERN

MIRROR

PUBLISHED WEEKLY
IN THE HEART OF
EASTERN NORTH
CAROLINA

Copy
NB-Craven Library
400 Johnson St.
New Bern, NC 28560

VOLUME 11

NEW BERN, N. C., FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1968

NUMBER 25



What's in a name? Quite a lot if you happen to win a special award in the Miss America Pageant, and suffer the embarrassment of hearing someone else's name called out as you step forward to receive your honor on coast to coast television.

How does New Bern's Miss North Carolina, Anita Johnson, feel about an error so regrettable that the National Broadcasting Company apologized to her for the hard-to-understand blunder. It was typical of this girl that she shrugged off the incident, displayed no bitterness, and accepted the apology at face value.

From our vantage point on press row, a very short distance from the stage, this editor watched Anita's reaction to the miscue, while it was happening and during the balance of the program. She was relaxed, rather than fuming, and wore a smile that for serenity outdid Mona Lisa's expression in one of art's greatest masterpieces.

Tuesday the two of us discussed this and other aspects of the Miss America Pageant during a three-hour get together. As only the closest of friends will, we did a lot of confiding in each other, and much of what was said won't see print, now or later.

"I've always had religious faith," she told us, "but I've been closer to God this year than ever before. It was tangible faith, and I felt that whatever was in store for me was God's will, and I accepted this fact."

What impressed her most in Atlantic City? "The contestants I had to compete with," she quickly answered. "The competition was terrific, but they were wonderful girls, every one of them, and all of us cried when it came time to say good-bye."

However, no one else won Anita's affection quite so completely as Patricia Joy Burmeister, who represented New York State. The two formed a mutual admiration society as soon as they met, and our Miss North Carolina was elated when Pat was selected as one of the ten finalists.

Born July 5, 1944, Pat is several years older than Anita, but they have much in common, including a great love for music. Surely, you'll remember Miss New York for her brilliant rendition of a difficult operatic aria, "The Bell Song." To our way of thinking it was one of the top all-time performances in Pageant history.

Incidentally, Anita and Pat were the only two girls among the fifty competing who were invited to audition for Radio City Music Hall. We have it through the grapevine that their auditions are only a formality, and that both need only to say the word to receive a contract.

We have been told that Miss North Carolina was second in her division in both talent and swim suit competition, and was tops among the fifty contestants in evening gown competition. Reports have it that her frank answers during interviews, which is the only way Anita would have wanted it, cost her a place among the ten finalists.

Frank answers or not, Leon

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BACK HOME—New Bern's Miss North Carolina, tired but still vivacious, cheerfully scrambled out of bed, and chased the sleep from those dark eyes of hers to pose for this special Mirror portrait. That beautiful trophy, awarded along with a thousand dollar scholarship as proof she was the best popular singer in the 1968 Miss America Pageant, is a sight to behold. Anita Johnson, so popular with other contestants that she missed the Miss Congeniality award by just

two votes, is being offered a RCA-Victor recording contract, wooed by Radio City Music Hall to not only sing but dance, and has been invited to go abroad on a USO tour. Right now she is booked until March for Tarheel appearances covering tens of thousands of miles, with special consideration given small towns. "The smaller the better," says Anita, "I love them."
—Photo by Billy Benners.