

MARIA GAMBLE'S REIGN as Mrs. Florida-America 1995

By Maria Gamble

It is hard to believe a year has passed since I was crowned Mrs. Florida-America. A year ago I met Jacqueline Solomon, director of the Mrs. Florida-America Pageant and Mister Lynn, the pageant's host. We have grown very close to each other and have shared so many wonderful times with each other. The experiences I have had and the friendships I have made will last a lifetime.

Over the past year, so many things have stayed with me in my heart, I don't know where to begin. Would it be the smiles I saw on children's faces when I passed out toys donated by the Disney Corporation at the San Jose Children's Hospital in Costa Rica during the Mrs. World Pageant? Or giving clothing to needy children at El Viento De Julio, a church charity in Colombia? Or maybe it was my gratifying work for the homeless and the American Cancer Society right here in Orlando?

It was so exciting representing Florida at the Mrs. America Pageant in Palm Springs, California. Every day was a beautiful memory because of the wonderful experiences I had and the many friends I made. Nancy Petropoulos, Mrs. Illinois, visited my home in

the past year. I had a great time showing her Orlando. My roommate in Palm Springs, Nancy Huey, Mrs. Ohio, has to be one of the most kind people I have ever met. A beautiful

experience I had was a trip with some of the contestants to the windmills in the Santa Rosa Mountains outside of Palm Springs. The sight of hundreds of windmills, turning in the desert wind with the sun setting in the background, was like an enchanting dream.

Going to the Mrs. World Pageant in Costa Rica was even more exciting; not only did I have the honor of being selected as first runner-up at the pageant, I also had more wonderful experiences. Being close to nature in the tropical rain forest with its beautiful trees, flowers, and colorful exotic birds was breathtaking.

The most memorable experience during this trip was when the other ladies and I were at the base of a live volcano at the hot springs of the Tilajari Resort. The volcano actually erupted! Luckily, it was only a minor one, but I have to admit that my heart did jump a little.

And then there were the wonderful gifts I received as Mrs. Florida-America. More than the gourmet dinners, the mink coat, and the jewelry, I think my family and I most enjoyed

the Caribbean cruise. We were all treated like royalty! The staff took care of my two beautiful children with activities during the day and my husband, Peter,

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and I were finally able to relax and enjoy a much awaited vacation. We also enjoyed our trip to Spain. Madrid was a fascinating city and the beaches of Marbella were so beautiful.

As fabulous as all the gifts, honors, and experiences I had during the past year were, most importantly, I have found a new family. Jacqueline has to be one of the sweetest and most loving persons I have ever met. She and her husband Ron have supported me every step of the way. Mister Lynn has been a father to me, giving me advice and guidance when I needed it the most. And, of course, Jose Vergara and Jorge Portell, the pageant's choreographers, were always there for me. They put their hearts and souls into helping me be the best I could be. That is why I think of them as more than friends, they truly are part of my family.



Jacqueline Solomon (Mistress of Ceremonies), Maria Gamble (Mrs. Florida America 1995) and Mister Lynn, (Master Host).



Maria with Mrs. World Marisol Soto de Vollo and the other three runners-up.



Maria and her children on their way to the Mrs. America Pageant.