

# Gina Major

## Miss Pennsylvania shares memories

By JEAN HILLARD  
Special to The Dallas Post

If someone were to ask who is Gina Major, probably everyone across the state of Pennsylvania would say she's Miss Pennsylvania. Chances are if someone were to ask what exactly does Miss Pennsylvania do for the next 12 months after she receives her crown, most would not know.

In an exclusive in-depth interview for The Dallas Post readers, Gina Major takes us step-by-step through her year as Miss Pennsylvania.

Gina is a Back Mountain native and has brought us much publicity across the state since receiving her title of Miss Pennsylvania 1984. She worked very hard, maybe a lot harder would be a more accurate statement, to achieve her goals.

The pretty girl from Lake-Lehman High School and a former member of the award winning Lake-Lehman Band she went on to Drexel University where she received a degree in marketing and merchandising. Gina was raised by a single parent and did not come from a money family. She had to work for every opportunity she had. Gina always set her goals high and worked very hard, her strongest competition being herself.

"I must do better than I did the time before," she would often say. "I must improve on myself." Thus she lost many pageants and kept returning until she won the title of Miss Pennsylvania.

The Miss Pennsylvania crown was placed on Gina's head in Altoona before a crowd of nearly 3500 people. The excited screams, tears of joy, laughter, overwhelming feelings of success that night were just the beginning of one year filled with hard work, little sleep, miles and miles of driving across the Keystone State, smiling for photos, rehearsals, shopping for clothes, etc.

Gina was presented with the Miss Pennsylvania car, which, because of her extensive travelling, had to be replaced twice during the year.

From June until September, Gina spent every day preparing for the Miss America Contest held in Atlantic City. Those three months consisted of daily exercise of aerobics and Nautilus workouts. Shopping for evening gowns, wardrobes, learning to walk properly, practicing stage preparation, interviewing, hair appointments, entertaining and more rehearsals until nearly exhausted filled her daily schedule.

Back home, plans were being made for a reception in her honor at Gus Genetti's in Wilkes-Barre. At the reception, Gina received a key to the city from Wilkes-Barre mayor Thomas McLaughlin, special recognition from politicians such as Rep. George Hasay, Senator Frank O'Connell, and Rep. Frank Coslett. Hundreds of Wyoming Valley residents as well as Back Mountain neighbors were on hand to greet Gina and to watch the crowning which played on Video TV throughout the evening.

Gina met nearly every politician across the state and a national senator who resides in the Philadelphia Area had a flag flown across the capitol in Washington in Gina's name. The senator later presented the flag to Gina.

In Altoona, Gina was sworn in as the first female member of the Jaycees, Altoona Chapter.

The Miss America contest over, her traveling extended into a full-time, where she sometimes had to drive three or four hours to speak or entertain or sometimes just to appear in one corner of the state.

Every day was filled with hard work. Gina appeared at numerous parades across the state, attended and entertained at fashion shows, visited many high schools and encouraged children across our state. She sang at the Vets Stadium in Philadelphia for the Phillies and Eagles (She even got to work with Tug McGraw one day. Remember

when he was the guest speaker for Back Mountain Little League, the year he pitched the winning ball for the World Series?)

Miss Pennsylvania entertained at many local pageants across the state, appeared at the International Air Show at Harrisburg Capitol, the Pittsburgh Auto Show, the Philadelphia Auto Show, the famous Philadelphia Gimbel's Thanksgiving Parade, the Bloomsburg Fair and even hosted a telethon for Hershey Medical Center.

Gina had the distinct honor of addressing the House and Senate at our state capitol. She performed at a Luau at Tamiment, sang at the Christmas tree lighting at our Capitol, made several appearances for American Motors and also for Pepsi, the main sponsor of the Miss Pennsylvania pageant. Gina appeared at many openings of new businesses across the state, did the opening for the State Junior Olympics, Keystone Games at Penn State Main Campus, and also opened the State Special Olympics in the Poconos.

Of all her appearances, Gina laments those close to her heart were the College Misericordia Parade and the Sweet Valley Memorial Day parade (made possible by her uncle Russ Major of Major's Cycles, Trucksville.) She recalls seeing people she grew up with or



### On the beach

Gina is shown here during the bathing suit competition for the Miss America Pageant.



### Beginning her career

Gina Major, Miss Pennsylvania 1984, is shown here just after being crowned at the Miss Pennsylvania Pageant in Altoona last year.



### On the road again

A very demanding schedule is probably the most difficult part of the reigning Miss Pennsylvania. Here, Gina waits for transportation with her Pageant host.



### Disrobing?

The darndest things can happen to a Miss Pennsylvania as Gina is assisted here by two policemen as she sheds long underwear during a parade. With fall weather playing tricks on parade participants, Gina started the day with long-johns to keep warm, then needed help getting them off as the day wore on.

graduated with and how good she felt to see them supporting her and sharing her excitement with her.

Though her days were full and tiresome, her memories are numerous. Gina met and in several instances, shared the stage with such celebrities as Liza Minelli, Catherin Bach (Dukes of Hazard) Tim Reid of WKRP Cincinnati, Emmanuel Lewis (Webster), Bill Beyers (of Capitol and Gina's favorite), Patrick Duffy, Tug McGraw, Willie Stargell, Oscar Robertson, Willie Masconi, Bob Pellegrini and Gary Collins, of course. Gina met and entertained with numerous soap stars, some of them being A. Martinez, Martin Vidnavoic and Stephen Schnetzer who all appeared on stage at the Miss America Pageant. Gina also met two of Canada's finest flyers, "The Snowbirds."

Her wardrobe sponsors for the year were Melba's Fashion Nook, Diane's Designs, J.C. Penney, Hess's and Muscalvo's Furs. In return, Gina made several appearances for those businesses.

Through her year of meeting famous people and hard work, Gina has made several contacts for future jobs. Some she has already signed with are WNEP-TV where she will be seen on PM Magazine. She has also signed with an entertainment manager and will be doing auditions in New York, Los Angeles for commercials, soaps and the theatre. In the fall, she plans to work with Chiodo Theatre Co. in New York and is working on some cruise shows with two other Miss Pennsylvanias. Gina is also going to use her knowledge of skin care and make up in sharing with people by becoming a Mary Kay Consultant.

From now until September, Gina will be appearing at functions and meetings as Miss Pennsylvania until the Miss America Pageant is over, then she will be accepting engagements as the former Miss Pennsylvania.

We've walked through the years with Gina and now we have a real picture of a celebrity's lifestyle.

Gina is most grateful to several area people such as Gil Tough of Lehman, local Blue Cross executive, who provided her with health insurance for the year, all the wardrobe suppliers and Forty Fort Branch of Local Teamsters Union and the employees of Acme Markets and also Gus Genetti's for their special help. The Mack Trucking Company has supplied Gina with many special favors during her traveling experiences.

Gina will soon depart for a trip to Hawaii, using tickets she received from an airline company for an appearance she made at the opening of a new terminal. She was to have a trip for two "anywhere she chose" at the end of her reign, to relax and unwind, a well-deserved trip, a great ending to a great year.

## Skills can be taught for fun

Can you find your way in the forest? This is a very important skill for a hunter or a hiker. Can you find your way in the city? Many delivery people and postal employees find this skill critical. These skills are taught for fun, safety and competition in the 4-H orienteering project.

Orienteering is learning to find your way using a map and compass. In its competitive form, it is done against time. Personal fitness becomes a factor. Targets are set up in the woods and players try to find them, collect the secret code and get back to the starting point before the other competitors.

This is done with very simple equipment and basic skills. First 4-H'ers are taught to pace to count their steps while walking.

To learn how to find your way with a map and compass and join the fascinating sport of orienteering, call or write Donna Skog at the Cooperative Extension Service, Courthouse Annex, 5 Water Street, Wilkes-Barre, Pa. 18711. Phone 825-1704 or 459-0736, ext. 704.



### Gina and her family

Gina is shown here with members of her family prior to a speaking engagement before the State House of Representatives. From left, Rick Geist, a state representative from Central Pennsylvania; State Representative Frank O'Connell, Gina Major, Virginia Major, Gina's mother; Mark Major, Gina's brother; and Judy Major, Gina's sister.

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