

Miss Mississauga, a year later: older and a little wiser

By SUSAN de STEIN
She somehow looks more poised, calmer and a little more self-confident than she did on that glittery night back in October last year.

That, however, comes with the territory. And the experience.

Karen Anne Simms'

territory is Mississauga. As the reigning Miss Mississauga 1978, Simms has acted as the city's representative for close to a year. She will be relinquishing her crown next month at the 11th annual Miss Mississauga pageant.

The year has been one she won't easily forget.

Simms, 20, completed her first year studying drama, theatre and music at Sheridan College this year. She has represented Mississauga at the Miss Canada pageant, and at numerous events and special activities in the city.

What she has gained this year has nothing to do with the long list of prizes she claimed last October.

More than anything else she says, she learned how to deal with different people and situations. "You meet quite an assortment of people during the year. You learn how to meet people, how to talk to them . . . how to cope with being among strangers.

"But I also learned things about myself and my priorities . . . Especially during the Miss Canada competition I found out more about the feelings I have about home, my family and special people. How much they mean to me.

"Here I thought I was so independent. But halfway through the pageant, when I was among people I didn't

know well, I learned who to put first.

"I also realized what I wanted to get out of the entire experience. Winning just didn't seem all that important. What was important was to get the most out of the experience. Let's face it, I was exposed to things I would not have ordinarily. And to meet people."

Although she admits the expression "everyone's a winner" seems a bit cliché, she claims there's a lot of truth in it. "When you think of the number of girls who were involved in the individual pageants across Canada . . . everyone at the Miss Canada pageant is a winner, whether or not they make it to the finals."

Karen Anne doesn't think she won the Mississauga crown because she was prettier, more talented . . . or more anything. "I don't think anyone can say they're better than the next person. Maybe different somehow — everyone's different. But not better. That's not how the pageant should be regarded."

Nor should pageants

be regarded as 'meat parades', she says. "Really, the only part that could be considered a meat parade might be the bathing suit competitions . . . but when you think about that, we're only in our suits for a matter of minutes. What the judges are really looking for is how you carry yourself, and your poise."

She does agree, however, that appearance is very important to her. But on the other hand, she doesn't want to look painted, either.

"That's why I don't

involved in children's theatre.

Although she hasn't got her hopes up, she's also auditioning for Lawrence Welk at the end of this month.

let anyone do my hair or make-up. Your hair says a lot about you. You are accustomed to one way and you know yourself what looks and feels the best."

An accomplished singer and pianist, Karen Anne hopes to pursue a career related to music and theatre. From the days when, as a youngster on long trips in the car, she and her family would sing harmony, she has loved music. Whatever else the future holds, there'll be music.

She'd like to become

"Actually, it's an audition by proxy — my Uncle Jack is taking a tape down to Los Angeles and finding out what he thinks.

She has some fond

memories of her year as Miss Mississauga and many mementos by which to remember it. One of her more treasured items is a watch, given her by the

Erin Mills Kinsmen club during their Strawberry Festival in June.

A more poised, and a little more worldly Karen Anne will crown her successor Sept. 23.