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By Selena Ulch

Dear Friends,

I am honored to have the opportunity to represent professional rodeo as Miss Rodeo America and to share the experiences I have gained from doing so with you!

The Miss Rodeo America Pageant is primarily run by volunteers. First and foremost, I would like to thank all of the volunteers that made the 50th Anniversary so special. The chaperones at the pageant were especially wonderful. With twenty six eager contestants fluttering about, I can only imagine how much patience they must have. Thank you to all of you who worked diligently throughout the year and throughout the week of the pageant to make it successful!

The 2005 Miss Rodeo America Pageant was a great success because the contestants brought the level of competition to new heights. The contestants this year are not only intelligent, beautiful, and classy, but they are the future of professional rodeo. We all share a passion for America's original sport. I have a conviction that the future of professional rodeo is bright because of the dedication of these young women. I love each and every one of them!

Shortly after being crowned Miss Rodeo America, my new life began! I thought that I was going to be exhausted after the pageant, but my adrenaline kept me energized and eager throughout the entire week as I looked forward to my duties. My feet hit the ground running and there has not been a dull moment since. Being introduced at the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo as Miss Rodeo America 2005 on December 5th was the most exhilarating moment of my life.

The Monday after the pageant was a magical day. Tara Graham, Bronc and Kate Rumford and I were up before the sun in order to get the perfect photo for Absorbine. Kerri Tuckness was the mastermind behind the camera as I smiled and Tara did her best to creatively keep "Chubbs'" attention. After a tasty breakfast, the destination was the Thomas and Mack for the Exceptional Rodeo. Anxious children filed into the arena and partnered with professional rodeo's most prestigious athletes for a day of roping, riding and racing! The cowboys and cowgirls connected with the children and it was truly a magical experience that had the power to humble even the most prideful heart.

On Tuesday December 7th, I spent the morning delivering gifts the 2005 Miss Rodeo America Pageant contestants brought to give to the children at Child Haven. After visiting the cottages that house the children, I was able to speak to the students attending school on the premises and sign autographs for them. During the Clark County Commissions Meeting, I received a Proclamation from Clark County in appreciation for our philanthropy. This experience is very dear to my heart and I thank the contestants for their gifts as they brought the brightest smiles to the faces of innocent and deserving children.

The day only got better when I went to the Fellowship of Christian Cowboys luncheon at the San Remo Hotel where I was given an exquisite hand-tooled leather Bible. We were blessed to share a great lunch, enjoy the company of others, hear a touching message and fill the room with song. I am so thankful that I was able to attend!

The Pro Rodeo League of Women's Fashion Show was a great success. There were over 195 items auctioned and I was able to help Flint Rasmussen by drawing the tickets and taking the items to their lucky winner. The event was sold out and I was glad to see so many people there to support the Justin Cowboy Crisis Fund.

Friday was another early morning! I met with Arlene Worley in the lobby of The Orleans Hotel at 5:00 a.m. and we were off to the Spurs and Spikes Golf Tournament at the Stallion Mountain Country Club. I toured the golf course stopping at every hole to take pictures with each foursome

in the competition. I had the opportunity to meet Dale Martin, Don Gay, Charles Sampson, Phil McAdams and so many other gentlemen who have made immeasurable contributions to the sport of rodeo and western industries! I even got to drive my own golf cart which I considered fun, but the photographer may have considered hazardous! I am grateful that we can raise money for a vital cause while doing the activities that we love.

During my stay in Las Vegas I had the pleasure of spending quality time with one of the West's most influential women, Arlene Kensing. We kept a tight schedule and covered a lot of ground, but we always found time for ice cream and a good laugh here and there. Between photo shoots, interviews, and luncheons, the time slipped through my fingertips. It seems as though I blinked and the ten days of the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo had rushed by.

Shortly after Christmas I was on a plane to "Sunny California" where it was anything but sunny. Miss Rodeo California, Kayla Spurlock, and I had the prestigious honor of riding in the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena. We rode alongside world champion trick roper Felix Lopez and the infamous Broken Horn Ropers. I was well mounted thanks to the generosity of the Russell family in letting me borrow their athletic Quarter Horse, Shiloh. More than 1.2 million people lined Colorado Blvd. as we made our way down the parade route. It was a sight to behold.

During my stay in California, I attended the Equifest Party at the Gene Autrey Museum. This celebration was for all of the mounted riding groups who were going to be in the parade. I had the honor of meeting the President of the Tournament of Roses, Mr. Davis, as well as the Rose Queen and her Court. I marveled at the architecture and artwork in the museum and then went into the theater and watched a short film on the history of horses in the Parade of Roses. It was a night to remember!

Equifest took place the next morning. Every mounted entry demonstrated their talents and costumes. Riding Luciano De La Hoya's gorgeous Quarter Horse "Isabella", I led the Broken Horn Ropers into the arena to showcase their talents. I was later invited to ride on the horse drawn Ladder Truck with the California Firefighters Association. We made a few hot laps around the arena with the sirens blaring and then we came to a stop in the middle and the firefighters demonstrated how to use the giant ladder in a freestanding maneuver! From draft horses to drill teams, the crowd was treated to a wide variety of equine talent!

Jim and Sue Stauffer graciously opened the doors of their home to Kayla and I. I cherish the time I spent with the Stauffers and I appreciate their kindness. They made our New Year's a delight as we were taken to a restaurant of fine cuisine. Sue chauffeured us around La Canada and surrounding areas. I was thrilled to visit with Sue and hear the stories of when she was Miss Rodeo America. California may have been rainy and cold, but the Stauffer home was warm and welcoming!

The Miss Rodeo America program touches the lives of young women spanning the United States. I am honored to be a part of this life-changing organization. My conviction of this sport only grows as I see the comradery that is extended between competitors, concern for the welfare of our animals and patriotism that is never forgotten among the rodeo family. Here is to another fifty years of Miss Rodeo America!

Hope to see you down the trail!

Sincerely,
Selena Ulch
Miss Rodeo America 2005