

## Marisol in Mexico

### Lighting Up the Sky

Waiting anxiously in the twilight, Marisol Alfaro tried not to fidget in her yellow gown. "I had to wait until it was dark because of the fireworks," laughs the Dallas model and high school student. As night fell in July 2005, she entered the Hacienda San Gabriel de Barrera, fireworks lighting up the Guanajuato sky overhead. Inside 100 people from across the United States and Mexico, waited for her.

### Careful Planning

Like her sister two years before her, Marisol chose to have her quinceañera in Mexico, where she was born. "It was important for me that it was in Mexico," she says. "I love Mexico, most of my family is down there and I wanted to share this for them."

An aunt helped to coordinate her party at a 17th-century hacienda and a picturesque church in Guanajuato, communicating with Marisol and her parents through e-mails and phone calls. But while arrangements were going smoothly in Mexico, Marisol was having a little trouble finding her dress in Dallas.

"I freaked out a lot about the dress because I didn't get it until a week before the party. I knew what I wanted; I already had a picture of it in my head. But finding what I wanted was hard. Prom season was over so those dresses were gone. If I did find something I liked, it was too short," says Marisol who is 5'9". "Finally, they had to make my dress and it wasn't ready until almost the last minute. But when we got it, it was really nice.

I was happy with it. "I was happy with all of it," she laughs. "It was a lot of planning, but everything turned out nice. We didn't try to get just expensive stuff, stuff to show how much money we were spending. We wanted everyone to have a good time, and if we were showing off, saying, 'Wow, look at how much money we're spending!' it would have taken the focus off what was important."

### Making Her Mark

"My sister's quinceañera was just two years before mine, and I didn't want mine to be just a copy of hers. It was my party, so we had to make everything about me, but not in a selfish or self-centered way. We thought about how we could represent me, what would show people who I was as a person."

Marisol's dad Alejandro Alfaro admits he and his wife Aida both shed a few tears at the quinceañera. "When we were in church, it was wonderful. Our faith is very important to us. We were presenting her before God, it was such a proud moment for us."

### Proud Parents

Marisol says she was aware of how important the night was for her family. "My parents have done so much for me, given me so much support and love, I wanted to make them proud."

According to her father, she did. "We were so proud of her that night," he says. "Right before our eyes, she was becoming a señorita. It was wonderful to see her blossoming, just like a flower. It was surprising for me how emotional it was. As a father, to hold your daughter in your arms, dressed like a princess, that was so exciting—and so emotional."

Olivia Flores Alvarez is the editor of BravoHouston!, an arts supplement to the Hispanic weekly newspaper Semana News. She regularly covers Latinos in entertainment for other Texas based publications, including the Houston Press newspaper and OutSmart Magazine. Olivia is also a contributing reporter for the KPFT Evening News, a Pacifica radio network affiliate.