



Veteran sweeps clown at top-hat coronation.

Top-hat affair marks sweep's coronation

By CAROLINE PETRICH
Of the Emerald

It may have lacked the pageantry of a monarch's coronation, but the chimney sweeps of the Eugene-Springfield area didn't seem to mind.

With yellow and green streamers flying from their grimy sweeps and yellow daisies on their black lapels, eight sweeps and about 30 spectators gathered on the downtown mall Friday for Jeffrey Bull's "coronation."

During his three-year apprenticeship, 18-year-old Jeff climbed up roofs and through flues with his father, David, whom Jeff calls "the jolly good chimney sweep."

"Jeffrey served as an apprentice longer than a majority of sweeps in the United States," David says. "He was on me for quite a while to get him a top hat."

David began sweeping in Eugene four years ago after following chimney sweeps in an English neighborhood years ago. When he first moved here with his family, David had no source of income and decided to start his own chimney sweeping business, although

he'd never thought of being a professional sweep.

"I have a real feel for the tradition of chimney sweeps," David says, adding the coronation is a tradition that honors a sweep who has earned the right to wear a top hat, the chimney sweep's crown.

"It's more interesting than the run-of-the-mill job," Jeff says. "The best part about it is getting up on the roof in the sun."

David agrees. "You get a different view of the world," he says.

During the coronation David reads from a calendar he designed himself. "In our age of modern sophistication and cynicism, the chimney sweep is still an enigma. The fireplace chimney suggests the unknowing."

To passersby, the small group of men and women in black do look mysterious with their thin poles supporting stiff brushes.

But David reassures the crowd with a quote from 19th Century poet Charles Lamb. "The grin of a genuine sweep has no malice."

"Everything about a chimney sweep is good luck," says James Kaufman, co-partner of the Four Seasons Chimney



Photos by Dennis Tachibana

Jeff Bull grins over his new status — a full-fledged chimney sweep.

Sweep Company. Long ago, people believed evil spirits skulked in chimneys, and sweeps shooed them away.

"Basically, whenever anyone needs an extra edge of good luck, they can call me, or now, my son," David says. "I'm very grateful I can keep it in the family."

After Jeff promises to look for cracks in chimneys, never to dirty a customer's white rug, and most importantly, never to take off his hat when up on a roof (it's bad luck), David reverently places a brand-new top hat on his son's head.

With grace and formality, the sweeps face each other and raise their sweeps to make a tunnel for their new peer. As Jeff

hesitantly walks through, the crowd joins the sweeps in singing "For he's a jolly good fellow."

"Three cheers for Jeffrey and all the chimney sweeps here today," David cries. A boisterous cheer rises from the group.

Jeff, now ready to tackle the sooty chimneys of Eugene as a professional and to join the brotherhood of chimney sweeps, says he hopes to get his own business card by next autumn, the season for chimney sweeping.

But when he stops working this year in late November, he wants to study either solar engineering or cooking.

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