



Upper left: Peacock in the Park, 1995.

Right: the late Lady Elaine Peacock, founder and namesake of the aforementioned celebration, shown here at Lesbian and Gay Pride in 1993.



## SEQUINS IN THE SUN

The roses are in bloom. The sailors have come and gone. Tourists are asking you for directions. The summer season is here and with it comes certain traditions, including Peacock in the Park, to be held Sunday, June 30, at the Washington Park Amphitheater.

And, considering this year's gala will mark the event's 10th anniversary, it definitely is a tradition.

For the uninitiated, Peacock in the Park is a fund-raising event—part picnic and part variety show—to benefit the Audria M. Edwards Youth Scholarship Fund. It was founded by Lady Elaine Peacock, the late Portland personality also known as Elwood Johnson and “Woody,” to support the academic pursuits of students who seem likely to give something back to the gay and lesbian community. The scholarship fund was named for Peacock's mother, also deceased, who was a founder and former president of the Portland chapter of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays.

Since Peacock's death on Oct. 27, 1993, the torch of responsibility for maintaining the event has been carried by a core group centered around Ray Southwick, who was Peacock's partner for many years, Kimberlee Van Patten and a former Imperial Sovereign Rose Court Rose Empress who is known simply as Maria.

Van Patten explains that while Peacock is no longer here, her spirit remains. “She [Peacock] wanted to do a fun show,” Van Patten says, adding that the emphasis is still the scholarship. “She was very involved in promoting gay youth.”

\* Maria echoes that theme, saying the bottom

### Dozens of Portland's most gorgeous drag queens strut their stuff to benefit queer youth at Peacock in the Park

story by Will O'Bryan, photos by Linda Kliever

line is collecting money for the scholarship fund. “We're trying to fill this very large container,” Maria says, referring to a collections container placed in front of the stage during the show. “We're looking for tips.” And, with 36 acts scheduled to perform, she seems confident they will get them.

All those performers and this year's audience will enjoy new sets constructed for the 1996 show. Another new feature is the Rose Town Ramblers, gay and lesbian square dancers.

In keeping with tradition, though, the Rose City Gay Freedom Band will perform before the show starts. Other returning crowd-pleasers are The Silver Platters, who last year charged the audience with *Brady Bunch* covers. The buzz this year is that they'll be paying tribute to “School House Rock!,” the educational cartoon series that's currently enjoying a renewed popularity among the twentysomething set.

Maria's 11-year-old niece, Nikki, will be putting in her third appearance. “She wants to be a drag queen,” explains Maria. “She's definitely one of the hits. Everybody goes crazy when she gets out there.”

Nikki likely won't be the only child at Peacock in the Park, Van Patten says. “We're trying to create a safe, family-type atmosphere—a chosen family atmosphere.”

“We want to keep it just good, clean fun. We try to keep everybody on stage pretty well clothed,” she says assuringly.

Adding to the family atmosphere, “all-American” favorites like hot dogs and snow cones will be available for a donation. Anchors on Ankeny will also run a booth. Alcohol won't be available, but the event organizers hold a host permit, which allows for picnic attendees to possess light alcohol at the park.

Van Patten says that even with people drinking, there have never been any problems at the park. She warns, however, that there have been problems with parking. To avoid the possibility of having your car towed, Van Patten suggests that attendees take advantage of the free shuttle running between the Embers Avenue parking lot, 110 NW Broadway, and Washington Park. The shuttle will run regularly from about noon Sunday until the event ends, around 7:30 that evening.

The organizers have amassed an impressive list of sponsors this year that have helped them secure this year's scholarship goal of \$10,000, which will be divided among nine recipients. This year's fund surpasses 1995's by roughly \$4,000.

This year's sponsors are: Balloons on Broadway, C.C. Slaughters, The City Nightclub, Classical Concept Hair Design, Eagle Tavern, Embers Avenue, Fantasy for Adults Only, the Imperial

Sovereign Rose Court, Miller Beer, the National Leather Association-Portland Chapter, The Roxy and The Silverado.

Peacock in the Park also relies on an army of volunteers. About 40 people are needed, Van Patten estimates. “They come out of the woodwork to make this happen.... People are there for hours to help.”

Another group lending help is the Equity Foundation, the nonprofit organization that administers the scholarship fund. Karen Keeney sits on Equity's board of directors.

“We're delighted to be able to support these valuable efforts,” Keeney says, adding that she hasn't missed any Peacock in the Park events since Equity became involved. She admits, however, that the most entertaining show during her day in the park doesn't always take place on-stage.

“It's funny to see the reaction of people who wander into the event,” Keeney says. She's seen puzzled park-goers stumble into the amphitheater and stare in slack-jawed amazement, while other surprised explorers settle in and even make a donation.

In that Peacock in the Park is a relatively wholesome event, it may be surprising that it could shock any unsuspecting passers-by.

“This is a family show,” insists Maria, adding there's no need to worry about nudity or profanity. But she cautions the squeamish: “You do have to worry about men in dresses.”

The picnic portion of Peacock in the Park begins at noon; the show starts at 4:30 pm. For more information, call 284-1733!