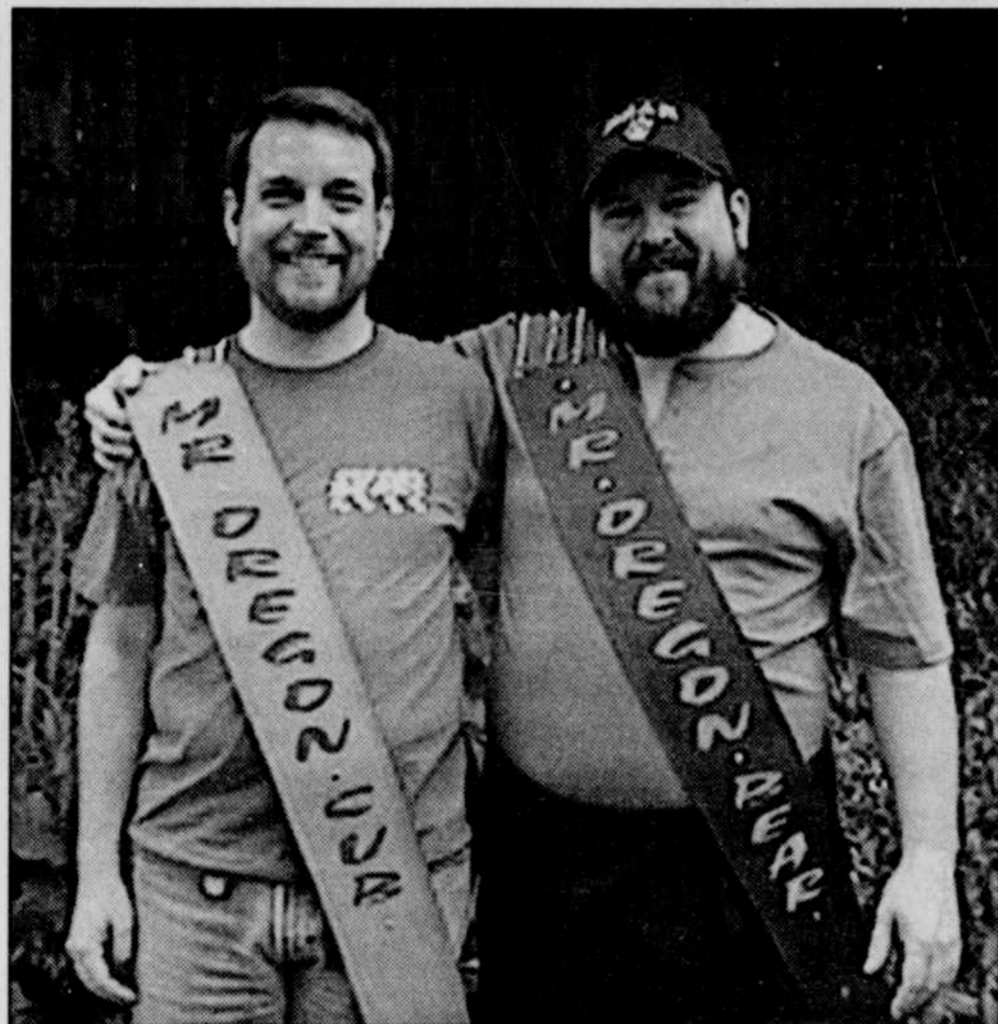


Like Bears to honey

Annual event brings furry fun

BY ANDY MANGELS



The reigning rulers of the furry realm, Mike Ryan and Mike Buliavac

Two polar-opposite groups are ready to descend on the City of Roses this month. One of them is generally clean-shaven and trim, belonging to a homophobic society known as the U.S. Navy. The other guys sport beards, goatees, mustaches and all permutations in between, often have bellies and belong to a homosexual community known as Bears. Guess which group is set to have more fun during Gay Pride month?

Sponsored by the Oregon Bears, the annual Beards & Roses weekend runs June 7 to 10 at various venues around Portland. The Meet & Greet from 8 to 11 p.m. Thursday at the Fox & Hounds, 217 N.W. Second Ave., is a great chance for people to get acquainted with the Bears and familiarize themselves with the special language and looks: Flannel shirts or Bear shirts are de rigueur, and a growly "woof" is considered a compliment on the order of "you're hot." You also can register for the event or pick up your identifications and weekend packages if you already are registered.

Friday brings the infamous and frolic-filled UnderBear Party from 9 p.m. until midnight at the Dirty Duck Tavern, 429 N.W. Third Ave. Strip down to your skivvies and rub bellies and backs in a bar crowded full of fur and testosterone. The Dirty Duck fills up fast, so don't be late or you might be waiting outside to get in!

The Bears gather about 10 a.m. Saturday on the corner of 10th Avenue and Southeast Stark Street, where they always have staked out a spot for watching the Rose Festival Grand Floral Parade, complete with canopy tent, food and a great view of the festivities.

That evening marks the main event of the weekend: the Mr. Oregon Bear/Cub Contest at the host hotel, the Red Lion Coliseum, 1225 N. Thunderbird Way. With cocktails at 6 p.m. and a scrumptious dinner buffet at 7, the crowd gets even happier once the contest starts at 8. That's when a hardy and hairy group of guys will compete for the titles of Mr. Oregon Bear and Mr. Oregon Cub, complete with "bearly there" looks that expose almost all! A dance follows at 10.

Mr. Oregon Bear Mike Buliavac and Mr.

Oregon Cub Mike Ryan say they had a great time fulfilling their title year. Both even competed at the International Mr. Bear Contest last February in San Francisco and made it to the top 12 finalists.

"It's been a lot more fun than I imagined it would be," Ryan says. "We got to travel a lot and make connections with other Bear clubs in B.C. and Seattle. We did all kinds of new fundraisers, including for the Friends of People with AIDS group, and adopted a grizzly bear at the Oregon Zoo!"

With a smile and a wink, Ryan refers to his practice of unrolling raffle tickets on lucky Bears' legs. "The thing I'm going to miss most is measuring inseams for raffle ticket sales."

Buliavac considers his year as Mr. Oregon Bear "an adventure. It was an exhilarating experience."

During his year, Buliavac launched events such as UnderBear Bowling at Pro 300 lanes. "Bears bowling in their boxers, shirtless!" he grins.

Several events also were held at the North-Bank Tavern in Vancouver, Wash. "I wanted to expand our options for fun and add diversity to the club."

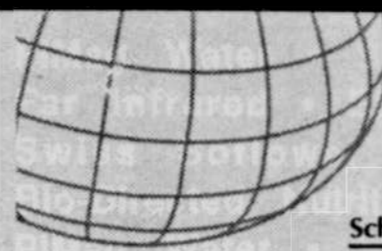
The weekend will wind down with a Bear Brunch from 10 a.m. until noon Sunday at Hobo's, 120 N.W. Third Ave. Weather permitting, a group of guys will meet there at noon for the Sauvie Island Excursion, their regular jaunt to the clothing-optional beach.

"The Beards & Roses committee has worked hard to do a weekend that is full of fun and furry memories," co-chair Ray Cox says. "We did our best to make the weekend more economical this year to allow more people from the community to attend. We're keeping our arms outreaching to the gay community and keeping connections going."

"In a way," Cox says, smiling, "I guess you could say that Beards & Roses is our big Bear hug to the community!"

For more information on BEARDS & ROSES 2001 check out www.oregonbears.org or call 503-240-2813.

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