

CULTURE

# I'm so glad we had this time together...

Co-hostess bids Peacock in the Park a fond farewell

BY POISON WATERS

The best thing that could have ever happened to a fledgling drag queen, thank the goddess, happened to me.

I was literally raised by the "elite" of our local drag scene (and beyond, some may say). Of course the reigning queen bee back then—some 14 odd years ago—was the Lady Elaine Peacock, aka Woody Johnson.

I was literally in "mouth agape awe" of this stunning creature who wholly embodied the spirit of that majestic bird. She strutted about ever so gracefully across every stage I ever saw her near. At the same time, with the purr of Eartha Kitt in our ears, we witnessed her signature feline reincarnation again and again.

Back then in my late teens, I never thought one person could affect my life, my disposition and my character so fully. I have literally molded myself—who I am—with Lady Elaine Peacock as my guide.

Peacock in the Park began as her dream. I wasn't around for the first three in the late '80s, but I witnessed her spirit and energy go into every aspect of the show each June thereafter.

All of us lucky enough to have enjoyed the annual event with Peacock herself, before she died in 1993, carry with us today a special feeling, knowing we have experienced magic. Never have I seen a person touch a community so profoundly. Literally every aspect of the queer community benefited from her, either from her generous nature or warm and genuine persona.

Peacock in the Park is the extension of just that; the coming together of a vast mix of people has always been the point. All differences aside—"let's have a show!"

We have carried on in that tradition, in her name, all these many years. Of course in its second year it became the main fund-raiser for the Audria M. Edwards Scholarship Fund for students who are queer or who have a queer parent—but it continues to provide a strong link in our community chain and a darn good time.

Peacock in the Park, to me, means her. It means as mistress of ceremonies, I'm given the chance to continue my friend's dream and continue entertaining, educating and embracing our diverse community, just as Lady Elaine did.

While I cannot compare myself to her, I certainly do my best to emulate her spirit. I think of her often, of course, but on that day, all day,



Poison Waters (left) and Lady Elaine Peacock in the early '90s. Right: This photograph of Woody Johnson, aka Lady Elaine Peacock, was part of the 1993 exhibit *Family, Friends and Neighbors*

she is with me. And, in fact, with all of us.

This being the final show in Washington Park of course brings many mixed emotions. Sadness? Yes. But a good sadness. Like the last day of summer camp, when you are bursting with the love and excitement of all you have experienced, all the while sadly knowing you will not see your friends again for a long time.

I also feel a great sense of pride and accomplishment. Peacock in the Park has grown so much since its inception, and I am so very proud to have had my small part in that.

Joy is another feeling. There are so many memories of fondness and laughter from each year—that I know is mirrored throughout our community. Countless e-mails, phone calls and personal accounts of the wonderful memories people hold of this event have been shared with all of us at Peacock Productions.

I'm definitely looking forward to my continued dedication to raising funds for the Audria M. Edwards Scholarship Fund (which, don't worry, isn't going away!) as well as the future ventures of Peacock Productions.

Thank you, Portland, and thank you, Lady Elaine Peacock, for giving this man a sense of purpose, for making my job so very fun, fulfilling and forever life-changing. ☐

Poison Waters and Maria host the 18th and final picnic and drag benefit PEACOCK IN THE PARK June 27 at Washington Park Amphitheater, 400 S.W. Kingston Ave. Pink Martini opens the show at 1 p.m. Arrive early for seating; shuttle buses leave every 15 minutes from Embers, Red Cap Garage and Fox & Hounds. Visit [www.peacockinthepark.com](http://www.peacockinthepark.com) for complete information.

POISON WATERS, aka Kevin Cook, served as Empress XLIV of the Imperial Sovereign Rose Court.

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