



Rose Empress XV Darcelle strikes a pose with Rose Empress VI Mame, who died earlier this year.

Frequently Asked Questions

Everything you wanted to know about the Rose Court but were afraid to ask

What false-started as the humble Court of Transylvania with the self-appointed monarch Queen Samuel I in 1958 finally got legs about a decade later when pageants were held to determine the winner of what was essentially a one-day title. In 1969 the Portland Forum began running the pageant in much the same way that it continues to this day, with one minor difference: The community at large could not vote for its monarch until two years later in 1971. Originally only men were allowed to hold the titles of Empress and Emperor—drag queens for the former, butch men for the latter. Now women of the biological persuasion can and have held the titles of both Emperor and Empress. What else should you know about the Imperial Sovereign Rose Court? Your intrepid reporter has compiled some of the most frequently asked questions for *Just Out*.

What is the Imperial Sovereign Rose Court?

ISRC is a nonprofit organization that raises money for different charities throughout the city of Portland.

Who can be a member of ISRC?

Membership is open to anyone older than 21 who lives in Washington, Multnomah, Clackamas or Columbia counties. Sustaining memberships cost \$20 annually.

How long has the pageant been running?

The pageant began in 1966, but until 1970 the title was "Rose Queen" and the pageant was more of a one-day title than a yearlong reign. The title in its current incarnation has been running since 1971, the same year that Empresses began being elected. Monarchs holding titles prior to the establishment of the title "Rose Empress" were retroactively granted this honorific.

Who can be Rose Emperor/Empress?

Anybody can reign as long as he or she has held another title within the Rose Court or another system that has been recognized by ISRC. (For example, Emperor Don Hood was Mr. Oregon State Leather 1998-1999 but has never held another ISRC title.) There are also requirements of

residency, active involvement in the Rose Court and active membership (attendance of six regularly scheduled meetings).

Have any women held the titles of Emperor/Empress?

Women have held both titles. Biologically female Empresses include Maria, Krystal Belle Rose and The Lovely Suzanne. There have been even more female Emperors including Karen Girl George Jar, Babalou, Kimberly van Patten and Shelley.

What steps do people usually go through to be an Emperor/Empress?

People usually start out with a White Knight/Debutante title, then work their way up. Sometimes people work their way through all the titles, then decide if they want to be Emperor or Empress. Sometimes, as in Hood's case, they just hold another local title recognized by ISRC.


What is expected of a titleholder?

The Emperor and Empress must attend regularly scheduled ISRC meetings and make appearances at certain out-of-town coronations. They also gather all previous monarchs by chairing "Ace" and "Ice" meetings in March and September.

Have any Emperors/Empresses been stripped of their titles? What would constitute grounds for such an action?

Titleholders have been stripped. Grounds for losing one's title include inappropriate behavior (for example, getting drunk and assaulting someone) and failure to comply with the requirements. The court would make the ultimate decision.

What charities does ISRC support? Who is eligible?

The court has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for charities such as Esther's Pantry, Our House of Portland, HIV Day Center, Pride of the Rose Scholarship Fund, Audria M. Edwards Scholarship Fund, Shepherd Legal Scholarship Fund, Doernbecher Pediatric AIDS Ward, Back to School, Camp Starlight, the Amazon Dragonboat Team, Greenhouse, Outside In and numerous breast cancer research funds. In order to receive money from ISRC, the organization must be have 501(c)3 nonprofit status. 



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