

now, Travis, for 17 years. I met him when I was 21. I've known him my entire adult life. We've been together for 12, been married for two. It's something we've talked about; it's something I've always wanted. Travis is happy with his family...my family disowned me years ago when I became HIV-positive. Basically, all we've ever had is just one another and all the friends we consider our family that are close to us. Patrick literally fell out of the sky.

WB: You just turned 39 on Nov. 2. How does it feel to be entering your 40s as a gay man?

BB: I'm excited. I would never want to be 21 again, or 25. I'm growing old disgracefully. And I'm enjoying every moment of it.

WB: Any favorite B/D/S/M activities?

BB: I love role-playing and domination. Spanking. Role-play is probably one of my favorites.

WB: What does it mean to you to be a bear?

BB: To be a bear, to be a bear. Gosh, the age-old question. I still consider bears to be part of the leather community—just like I consider part of the elements of the court and drag community to be part of the leather community, the way it started way back in Stonewall, when people had solidarity.

I love a panssexual life. I love all the wonderful people I have met, but there are times I need to be in a space with men. That's really important for my own self-identity. The Oregon Bears fits that in a way I could never get anywhere else in Oregon, and I am really grateful for that. A lot of them are not as radical or kinky as I am, and that's OK. They are still very loving, and they are still accepting. We really feel a sense of brotherhood.

WB: What's your definition of a masculine man?

BB: A masculine man walks the walk and not just talks the talk. It has absolutely nothing to do with the way you carry yourself.... I still see ads looking for somebody who is straight-acting. I don't even know what the fuck that is. Does that mean I go to airports and have sex with men in bathrooms? Is that straight-acting? Is that lying to my wife and kids?



Ben Brown Jr. celebrates his new title with Ms. Oregon State Leather 2007 Coral Mallow.

I've known a lot of effeminate bottom men who were bigger men than other macho leather men because they were loved, they were sure of themselves.

WB: Eagle Portland owner Pat Lanagan recently posted on the board outside his bar, "Just Out: Your emasculation of gay men is just wrong." How do you respond to that?

BB: I honestly believe there is some truth. And I'll be honest with you: Prior to doing this interview, I actually asked the boards of the Oregon Bears and Blackout Leather Productions for their feedback. Do I feel I am underrepresented in *Just Out*? Yes, I do. I'm not going to lie to you about that. The Oregon Bears is the largest gay men's group in this state, and I rarely see us get enough positive press for all the things that we do. We tend to do things very quietly. And we're OK with that—it's just that it would be nice to get recognized for that once in a while. Not just for the board, not just for the titleholders, but for the members. **10**

Darcelle XV Showplace presents the sixth annual COMMUNITY HOLIDAY SHOW 6 p.m. Dec. 9 at 208 N.W. Third Ave. The event will feature cabaret acts from the bear, leather and drag communities; an auction hosted by Poison Waters; a raffle; and Ben Brown Jr. posing as Santa Bear for \$5 Polaroids. Admission is \$5 or an equivalent amount of nonperishable items. Proceeds benefit Esther's Pantry and Central City Concern.

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