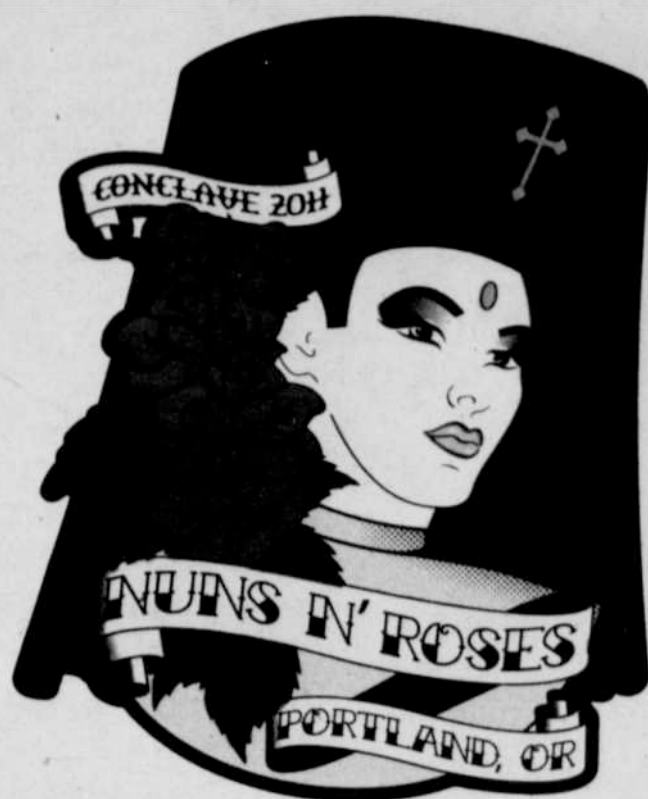




Welcome to the Jungle

The "Nuns 'N Roses" Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence International Conclave invades PDX

BY RYAN J. PRADO

Was it really six years ago that the tour de force known as the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence infiltrated Portland's LGBTQ scene? Can you fathom a time when the Entertainment District, or Old Town or Stark Street saloons were not teeming with white-faced, habit-bedecked nuns with safe-sex kits and bags of condoms? Well, fathom it: This summer marks the sixth anniversary of the incorporation of the Portland Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, The Order of Benevolent Bliss, Inc. as a fully professed house of the Sisters' worldwide order.

And what would this observance be if not an opportune time to show the rest of the order just how things work here in Portland?

Brace yourself for 100 Sisters, representing 22 missions and houses in 3 different countries, to descend into the Rose City, not-quite-flying-nun style, for the Sisters' International Conclave, August 15-21.

Dubbed Nuns 'N Roses for the Portland installment, the Sisters' Conclave gatherings are an annual meeting of Sisters of fully professed houses or missions—would-be houses getting their footing in the Sisters' world. The events are an opportunity not just to socialize, but to gain knowledge and understanding about the ongoing issues encountered by each Sisters' house. As Portland house co-founder Sister Mona Little-Moore explains, each microcosm is different, and Conclave is about recognizing and learning from diversity.

"We each gear our ministry to what our community needs," Moore explains. "What Portland needs is not necessarily what [Los Angeles] needs, or what L.A. needs may not be what Nashville needs. So each house is

autonomous. Because we do things differently, when we get together and talk about how we do stuff, it's always a learning opportunity."

The Portland house of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence began its journey seven years ago, just before Portland Pride 2005. Moore and some friends attended a bingo fundraiser event for the Oregon Bears hosted by the Seattle house of Sisters, and agreed that a Portland contingent could flourish. Given the Sisters' ethos of fundraising for smaller organizations, along with LG-BTQ advocacy, safe-sex education and one-on-one

ministering, Moore saw the need and the opportunity to begin something new in the region.

"At that time, there were three AIDS-related organizations that had gone under, and several

others [that] were in really serious financial trouble," Moore explains. "We were really aware that there was a need for fundraising. Nothing against CAP or Our House, but they were getting the lion's share of the money from the community. The smaller organizations really needed some help."

After organizing first as a mission, a soon fully professed Portland house launched with a three-part aim of helping raise money for other charitable organizations, conducting safer-sex education—by way of condom or other hand-outs—and community

outreach. Most in the larger public sphere have seen the Sisters during their regular bar crawls in downtown Portland. Between the elaborate nun-inspired costumes—donned not in mockery but to honor as "nuns of the

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