

Reign of the SLUG Queen

From Eugene with kisses and sluggles

BY MELISSA BEARNS

Both Eugene and Portland have queens but the similarities end there. We glorify our slimiest creature with the SLUG Queen (short for Society for the Legitimization of the Ubiquitous Gastropod). Portland celebrates fragrant flowers with the Rose Queen.

There, a formal ceremony, full of pomp and circumstance, ushers in the new Rose Queen. But Eugene residents crown the SLUG Queen in our most outrageous, extravagant festival: the Eugene Celebration.

What exactly does this choice say about the differences between our two communities?

"The Rose Queen is about glamour in the traditional, prime-time, nip and tuck, Botox, kind of way," said current SLUG Queen Inspira Gastropodium. "The SLUG Queen competition is Eugene's antidote to a beauty pageant. We're like a queen grown out of the health food section, and the wine section. The Rose Queen is like a combination of the pharmacy and the frozen foods section."

Presumed Mayor-elect Kitty Piercy said the SLUG Queen really represents the best of Eugene, our humor and ability to laugh at ourselves.

"From our congressman cleaning up behind a slug in the parade to our SLUG Queen being the honored person at the parade, the SLUG Queen is about how we like to have a little absurdity to bring laughter and lightness into our lives," she says.

But rumor has it that some members of the community would like to see the SLUG Queen slime away forever and say that it's a terrible image to represent the community.

"It's very hard for me to take that seriously," Piercy said. "I don't think it's an embarrassment in any way. I'm happy to have an amazing, unusual parade that brings our whole community together. And the SLUG Queen is a very important part of that."

Here's a look at some of the other differences between our two queens.



- Sponsorship: The community
- Requirements for the SLUG Queen: Must be 21 or older so she can drink heavily.

• Selection Process: Old SLUG Queens select the new SLUG Queen. Bribery is an essential part of becoming a SLUG Queen since it all depends on how many votes contestants garner from past queens.

"I always say, bribe early and bribe often," said Queen Inspira. With the selection and coronation just around the corner, she's racking up the booty. "Chocolate is always good. I've gotten socks, make-up, cute, little handbags, gift certificates, all sorts of things."

- Queen's Entourage: Personal paparazzi and ladies in waiting.
- Reigning Queen: SLUG Queen Inspira Gastropodium.
- Accomplishments: "When I was a child I was kicked by Bozo The Clown on television," Queen Inspira said. "That is one my claims to fame that I feel qualifies me to be SLUG Queen."

• Responsibilities/expectations: "The SLUG Queen is all about having a good time and glamour, glamour, glamour," said Queen Inspira. "One of the requirements of being a SLUG Queen is that you have to have a very high tolerance for public adoration. The queen is a cheerleader for her own adoration. What I do is promote myself. I remind people that we do have a royal family in Eugene, and that deference, bowing, curtsying, kissing the ring...those are things people should do."

• Terminology: Once they have served, SLUG queens are referred to as *old* queens.

• Special superpowers: The power to inspire people to do things they never dreamed possible is one of SLUG Queen Inspira's many talents.

• Perks: Lots of gifts, constant love and adoration, hot men will take off their coats and throw them in puddles on the ground in front of you so you don't have to muddy up your pedicure.

• "But the best thing about being the SLUG Queen is being a superhero for little kids," Queen Inspira said. "Little kids understand that the SLUG Queen isn't just a weird adult dressed up strangely. They realize that the SLUG Queen is truly the royal entity of Eugene."



- Sponsorship: Fred Meyer

• Requirements: A panel of seven judges selects the Rose Queen from among the members of the Rose Court after they are chosen by their schools. The Rose Court consists of one female senior from every public high school in Portland. They must be full-time high school students, have a GPA of at least 2.75, demonstrate good citizenship and have good attendance records. They are evaluated on character (50 percent), communication (25 percent), and presence (25 percent).

• Selection process: Court members are elected by a vote of their respective student bodies. Then the Rose Queen is selected by a panel of judges. "Selection of the judges is made after all Court Members are selected to make certain no relatives, friends or close associates of Court Members are included [in the panel of judges selecting the Rose Queen]," reads the handbook for the Rose Festival Court. "Every effort is made to screen the panel of judges so there is no special interest, relationship or preference that might cause unfair advantages."

- Queen's Entourage: The Rose Court
- Reigning Queen: Tara Beatty of Wilson High School
- Accomplishments: Tara splits her time between performing and volunteering. She has performed in four school plays and helped costume five plays as well. Tara was her sophomore class president and a member of the Improv Team. She has also won the Rotary Youth Exchange Scholarship. In her free time, she has volunteered at the Willowbrook Center for the Development of Human Potential, Portland Insight Meditation Community and been involved in the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Her hobbies include reading and practicing Thai language. She plans to pursue a career working for the U.N.

• Responsibilities/expectations: "Each Court Member represents her school throughout the months of May and June at many community events, including meetings with business leaders, visits to hospitals and meetings with a variety of civic groups." (from the Rose Festival handbook)

• Terminology: Once they have served, Rose Queens are referred to as *past* queens or *former* queens.

• Special superpowers: None that we can see.

• Perks: You get to say you were part of the Rose Court. Football players think you're cute. You get to wear a red dress and meet bigwigs.

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