

# Lightening Up the Parade

Leigh Anne Jasheway-Bryant laughs all the way to the crown ♦ BY SUZI STEFFEN

**S**L.U.G. Queen Glorious Gastropause never appears anywhere late or out of costume. Or at least not without matching her clothes.

"I am an anal-retentive queen!" she says, her purse, sandals and turquoise dress pattern all perfectly coordinated with the large bow in her hair.

When Glorious is at home, she goes by the familiar name of Leigh Anne Jasheway-Bryant, comic, radio host (temporarily unemployed in that capacity thanks to KOPT's well-publicized news team shut-down), author of the newly published *Life is Funny: A Riveting Tale of Comedy, Hairdressing, and Texas Politics*, stress management consultant — and refugee from the heat, humidity and family stressors of the South.

"Ah thought mah-ay-bee ah'd do this ay-centerveyew in a Southahn accent," she says, "but then I decided against that." But what kind of Southern accent?

"Well, I grew up as an Air Force brat, so I'm actually from all over," she says, sipping her iced tea (which doesn't appear to be traditionally Southern sweet tea, but that could mean the sugar has already dissolved given that her interviewer wasted some minutes parking in the garage across the street). Most recently (as in, 13 years ago) from Houston, she picked a slightly less twangy accent for the S.L.U.G. Queen contest a few weeks ago — something a bit more South Carolina, perhaps a bit Georgia. "More genteel," she points out.

But whatever the accent, Jasheway-Bryant doesn't need the S.L.U.G. Queen mantle to add to her considerable Eugene-area renown. Why is a woman so successful at all of her jobs (including writing humorous aprons, Post-It Notes and doormats), a woman whose name any reader of *The Comic News* (R.I.P.) or listener of KOPT's "Women Under the Influence of Laughter"

(R.I.P.) would instantly recognize, willing to become a costumed crusader for crust-less creatures?

"In my life, I do a lot of weird stuff anyway," she explains. Also, Jasheway-Bryant happens to be well acquainted with the Queen contest, having MC'd several Celebration Parades and judged several contests. This year is the EC's 25th anniversary, and Jasheway-Bryant thought her 50th birthday augured a propitious year to join her force to that of the festival.

thinks Eugene takes itself a wee bit too seriously around all of the issues. "You know that bumper sticker, 'If you're not outraged, then you're not paying attention?'" That bumper sticker, quite frankly, *does* outrage her. "Because how will you have energy for anything except being outraged?"

Instead, she chooses to put her energy into causes like WAG, PAAWS, S.A.R.A. and the Greenhill animal shelter — even though some of those animals she loves so much make her life a bit crazy. She specifi-



"I thought I'd get it out of my system," she says. Oh, and the Celebration's theme is perfect for Jasheway-Bryant, who teaches the Stand Up and Make 'Em Laugh class at LCC three terms a year: Lighten Up!

Don't get her wrong; she's serious about her chosen cause, animals (and she's excited to be followed in the parade by the runner-up in the Queen contest, whose Luv-a-Bull pit bull representatives may be wearing dance regalia: "When you have pit bulls in tutus, anything can happen!"). But she

cally didn't want to do an interview at her house because of her dachshunds, who make her life a bit hairy.

Animals and wellness, humor and activism, fit hand-in-Southern-length-glove for Jasheway-Bryant, who made her living as a wellness coordinator before trying out comedy in Houston, in the seamy underbelly of the comedy clubs. When she arrived in Eugene, she says, she came "with the intention of creating safe space for people to do comedy," not a smoky place where drunks

and other comics heckled women outrageously. For years, she and other women comics performed at Actors Cabaret of Eugene on Sunday nights, and then they moved around a bit, competing with big-screen TVs at sports bars, before landing at Diablo's. The club, where naked sushi and trailer trash themes compete with fetish nights for most certain to annoy various Eugene contingents, may seem like an odd "safe space," but Jasheway-Bryant says she finds it conducive to comedy.

Most of the patrons who get to the comedy shows downstairs know where they're going, and why. And at least part of that is the show, she says. "People come down there just for us — or for a blowjob, apparently."

But jokes aside ... no, wait. The jokes are never aside with Jasheway-Bryant. She writes greeting cards for American Greetings, Oatmeal and other companies to go along with those aprons, doormats and even "sacreligious candles" like those devoted to the Goddess of Parking Tickets. "You have to do everything you can do," the S.L.U.G. Queen notes, "because [comedy and writing are] not lucrative. I drive a 1991 Honda Accord because my 1992 Honda Accord was recently rear-ended." More heartrending than the car itself, she lost many bumper stickers in the collision.

But with her newfound celebrity come new blessings. For instance? "I threw a party, and *people came to it!*" she says. There's a slightly bigger party coming up, the S.L.U.G. Queen Silver Jubilee at the downtown library at 6:30 pm Friday, Sept. 6, and she's looking forward to reigning over the proceedings along with the Old Queens. "We should revel in that diversity we think is part of us," she says. "We may not have cultural diversity, but we do have funkiversity."

That reassures her. "Eugene is a place where you could walk down the street in bridal regalia and full kabuki makeup, and no one notices. Even when you go for it" (as in, even when you choose to become the gastropodal royalty for a season), "you cannot be the oddest person here." ♦

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