


Dont rain on my parade

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Wilson's first-ever Rose Festival queen appears on grand marshal float after Tournament of Roses slight 50 years ago

HILLSDALE - In 1962, when he was just two months old, Portland favorite Packy the elephant narrowly missed his chance at the title of grand marshal of the Rose Festival Grand Floral Parade. That year, Rose Festival Queen Cherie Viggers Sanville was also denied her chance to represent Portland in the Tournament of Roses.



by: VERN UYETAKE - Cherie Viggers Sanville waves from her seat in his year's Grand Floral Parade. Fifty years ago, she was not allowed to appear in the Tournament of Roses parade in Pasadena, Calif., and Rose Festival officials decided to right this wrong.

Taking a chance to right these past wrongs, this year's Rose Festival offered the two front and center spots in this year's festivities, as Packy took the title of grand marshal and Sanville rode on the grand marshal float in the June 9 parade.

Sanville was the first Rose Festival queen to be crowned from Wilson High School when she took the crown in 1962.

The selection process was different back then, she said.

Each senior girl was expected to tryout for the court. They would all walk across a stage and state their names, Sanville said, and then they were narrowed down into groups of 40 and 20 finalists.

"It was part of senior experience," she said.

She said this version of the selection process helped her at the time.

"I wasn't princess material," she said. "I was 5-foot-2 and had freckles."

That year, Sanville made appearances at festivals such as the Seattle Seafair and received \$500 in scholarship money. When she married her husband, Dave, three years later, she wore the gown she wore as Rose Festival queen as her wedding dress.

The year of Sanville's reign, a float was built in honor of Packy's birth.

At the time, queens rode in the Grand Floral Parade, but only floats were sent to the Tournament of Roses in Pasadena, Calif. There had been a push the previous year to send the queens as well, and so the Rose Festival agreed to send Sanville to a reception in Pasadena to watch the parade but not appear in it.

Once she got there, officials from the Tournament of Roses offered to put her on the float, which honored Packy, in the parade.

However, when they called to ask permission from the Rose Festival, its organizers declined and said they wouldn't have their queen riding on a float with elephants.

The decision caused a stir with the public, resulting in letters to the editor and a story in the Oregonian.

Sanville said 50-year Rose Festival queens traditionally ride in a car in the parade, but researchers found these original newspaper clippings and decided to make up for the festival's earlier decision.

When officials called Sanville, she said she just started laughing.

"It felt like déjà vu," she said.

So, 50 years later, Sanville rode on the grand marshal float during the 100th annual parade. And although, as in 1962, Packy was represented in the parade with a life-size likeness, Sanville did get some up-close-and-personal time with him at his home at the Oregon Zoo, where she fed him bananas.

"He was very gentle. (His trunk) felt like little fingers," she said.

Sanville, who has participated in seven other Rose Festival Grand Floral Parades (and has never been rained on), said her seat from atop the grand marshal float was cold but came with a great view of the crowd, including high school classmates, her children's friends and four of her six grandchildren.

"You can see everything; faces," she said. "That's what made it the most fun."