

THE ROYAL TREATMENT

Who needs an Oscar when a tiara will do?

WHENEVER MY DAUGHTER BRINGS a new friend home, she likes to take her into my home office and point out the most interesting thing on my desk. "That's my mom's tiara," she says. "She and her friends all have them. I don't really know why."

For the last five years, I've belonged to a writing group, and each of us owns a tiara. I don't remember who, a little more than two years ago, was the first to bring up the idea of owning her own tiara. I just remember someone saying she was so happy with the way a piece of writing had turned out that she wished she could put on a tiara to match her sparkly feeling of success.

A statement like that was all the encouragement I needed. Two days later I was prowling the aisles at The Lippman Company, the party supply store in Southeast Portland, looking for nine tiaras. I hit the jackpot with a head-crowning beauty of fake diamonds inset with large pink heart-shaped faux jewels. The "gems" floated in a cloud of pink-edged white fluff. I passed the tiaras out at the writing group's next meeting. I have a photo of us at my dining room table, grinning and wearing the tiaras.

Once we took possession of the tiaras, things began to happen for us. Wearing your tiara when you sent off a piece of writing seemed to exponentially increase the chances of an editor accepting the story for publication. Our e-mail messages to each other began to fill with good writing news, what we liked to call Tiara Moments such as editors accepting essays and

articles for anthologies, newspapers and our favorite magazines.

Lest you think that I'm giving the tiaras too much credit, I'd like to point out that the members of my writing group aren't the only people to have recognized the subtle yet effective power of the tiara. At the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin, Italy, the only member of the U.S. Women's Ski Team to win a gold medal was Julie Mancuso, who often wears a good-luck tiara during her slalom runs. She even wore her tiara to claim her gold medal. Need I say more?

I used to wonder how my writing group has stayed together for so long because so often groups, whether they are writing groups or book discussion groups or some other kind, fall apart sooner rather than later. Honestly, I don't think anyone would've picked the nine of us—who vary widely in age, background and experience—out of a lineup and said, "You should form a writing group."

I think the reason we stay together has to do with how we met. We met in a writing class, and at the time, we were all going through some sort of transition,

running the gamut from the personal to the professional, and using writing to help make that transition happen. After class, we'd go for coffee or lunch and eventually we formed our own group to share our writing.

The woman in the group experiencing the most change in her life was Lori, a funny, intelligent and talented writer who quit a career in high-tech marketing to concentrate on writing after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. She outlived her diagnosis by more than five years and left behind a book of wonderful essays,

each one a quintessential Tiara Moment.

After Lori's memorial service at a church in downtown Portland, the remaining eight members of our writing group walked over to Jake's Grill, not to exchange and discuss new writings, but to have a wake of

our own, complete with champagne. Talking and reminiscing about Lori, I thought it would've been appropriate for our tiaras to have been set out on our table. Their glitter and sparkle are such tangible reminders of crucial things such as inspiration, friendship and writing. And, of course, the importance of cherishing the Tiara Moments of my life.

And that's why my tiara has a place of honor on my desk.

—Margaret Foley

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