



FEATURE

Prom: Then and Now

by Kerrey Gomes '00 and Chandra Kanani Oyama-Jackson '00



ABOVE—Joanne Kekuewa and Eli Nāhulu, queen and king of their 1955 senior prom

BELOW—Enjoying refreshments at their Junior-Senior Prom for the 1955-1956 school year are (l-r) James Bell, Margaret Freitas, Harold Iida, Deanne Kahapea and Sylvia Duncan

The latest topic of conversation in the halls besides college and summer plans is...prom. It is that time again to swap pictures and reminisce about that special evening. This annual high school event serves as a highlight of the school year to many. But, just how much do our proms today differ from proms in the past?

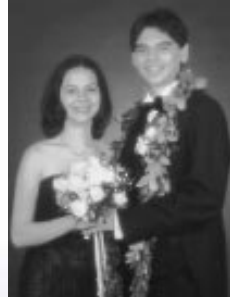
Ka Mō'ī archives indicate that the first annual promenade held at Kamehameha was in 1932. Today we simply refer to the promenade as prom; the words are synonymous.

This social function was held for both juniors and seniors and was organized by the junior class, mostly girls, in honor of the senior class. Back then there was even a prom King and prom Queen (who were seniors) whom the junior class elected.

An interesting tradition was dance cards that were filled out at regular school dances as well as at the prom. Each dance card had twelve sets with three songs per set. At the beginning of the prom, the girls would have their dance cards signed, promising a special someone that she would share in and devote a particular dance to him. Usually a girl's boyfriend would sign up for the first and last song of the night to romantically begin and end the evening. These days you spend



Chandra's April 2000 prom photo



Kerrey's April 2000 prom photo





ABOVE—Students prepare for the Junior-Senior Prom in 1959.

LEFT—Kekūhaupi’o Gym is transformed into a romantic wonderland for the Junior-Senior Prom in 1957. Kekūhaupi’o Gym hosted KS proms until the 1970s

the entire night with that special someone who is your date.

Instead of a formal banquet-style dinner that we enjoy at the modern prom, light snacks were served during an intermission of the early proms. There was also the traditional punch that sophomores, elected by the junior class, served to those attending the early proms.

As for the location of the prom, it was held at the school gym until being moved to a hotel setting in the 1970s. Since the prom was held on campus, the decorations were very elaborate and followed the theme of the evening. In 1951, there was an orchid tree with a nearby pond inside the gym. In 1952, there were cherry blossom trees, and a 17-piece orchestra provided music. In 1955, there was an island in the middle of the dance floor complete with a pink flamingo; nearby there were bird cages hanging on trees with live parakeets inside.

Despite the differences in location and decorations, some things haven’t changed in 68 years. The questions all students were asking one another both back then and now include: “What color and style is your dress?” “What are you going to do after?” “What kind of flowers are you going to order?”

When prom season rolls around, students are anxious in anticipation of the special night. The girls are attired in beautiful dresses and get their makeup and hair done while the guys look so handsome in their tuxes and styled hair. Spending the evening with that special someone and your friends enjoying dinner and dancing serves as a wonderful way to relax and make lasting memories.

Yet, it’s nice to know that while fashions and trends come and go, and while many things change, traditions are here to stay.



Kerrey Gomes '00

Senior Kerrey Gomes, 17, will attend Boston University this fall with a major in journalism. She aspires to be a newspaper reporter. Honolulu-born, Kerrey has been a student at Kamehameha since the 7th grade.



Chandra Kanani Oyama-Jackson '00

Eighteen-year-old senior Chandra Kanani Oyama-Jackson plans to attend the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa in the fall with a journalism major. Chandra hopes to be a television news anchor. Born in Eugene, Ore., she entered Kamehameha in the 7th grade.