

UNC-A Homecoming: A Tradition Whose Time Is Past

by Chris Mann



Photo by Mark West

For my first assignment as a reporter, I was given the job of covering the festivities at this year's Homecoming dance. As a fledgling, I received this job because the other members of the staff had better excuses for not attending than I was able to come up with. With very mixed emotions, I set about to cover the event and find a story. I woke up the morning after without so much as a hangover to show for all my in-depth research. I asked myself, "Why did you go to the Homecoming?" The dance was attended by over 500 people. "Why did they go to Homecoming?" Trying to answer these questions, I painfully recalled the events of the previous night.

The Homecoming dance was held this year at The Inn on the Plaza on February 15th. The dance itself ran from 9 p.m. until 1 a.m. and was followed by informal partying on the fifth floor. The informal carrying on began with the end of the formal dance and continued until the last reveler closed his

door sometime just before dawn.

I assumed, correctly, that the dance wouldn't be hopping early and arrived at the door of the Inn at 10 p.m. Press credentials were not honored at the door so, squeezing my formally attired body through the formally dressed crowd, I presented my UNC-A I.D. card at the desk and walked in to scout for a good seat. My discomfort was obviously shared by many of the blue-jean-at-heart-types in attendance. Many of the couples were so tense and stiff it seemed as if they had forgotten to remove the hangers from their clothes before dressing.

Reporting can be a rather dry task and so, after several minutes of diligent observing, I headed toward the lone keg of free beer. I may be a cub reporter with less than a fine tuned nose for news but I have a veteran's nose for free booze. I squeezed my way across the room hoping the supply of free beer hadn't run out. I reached the tap in time to get a

free brew and turned again to the task at hand. Before I could get back for a refill the freebies ran out. The death of the token keg did not bring a halt to the drinking, however, for the cash bar was packed all night. Many of the student imbibers complained that \$1.75 was a strong price to pay for a weak drink. The smart money went to the end of the bar serviced by a broken-armed bartender with a heavy hand who courageously poured the only good drinks in the house. He attained instant celebrity among the many cost-conscious drinkers and provided a bright spot in an otherwise dull evening. His efforts behind the bar helped many of the students loosen up beneath their unfamiliar attire.

The band "Staircase" provided the music for the evening and had a good effect on the chemistry of the dance. The band's repertoire included standard Top 40 tunes, some disco and down-home country boogie. Toward the end of their first set, the "main event" of the night began --- the announcement of the Homecoming King and Queen. A hush fell over the raucous crowd as they listened for the results of the election held in conjunction with the elections for Student Government President and Vice-President. The selection of Vice-President Mike Ochsenreiter as Homecoming Queen was the comic highlight of the night. The results are a vivid indication of students' disinterest in such remnants of past traditions and may signal the end of the custom here

at UNC-A. Homecoming King Chris Frank was intercepted by runner-up Queen, Judy Hunnycutt, ruining Chris' chance for a night with the rightful winner of the Queen's crown. Following the traditional King and Queen's dance, the floor was filled by other dancing couples.

The evening continued in its dull fashion until 1 a.m., when the last watery drink was served. Several dollars poorer and still in search of a story, I headed toward the party on the fifth floor. I found, not one big party, but a lot of small, private soirees. Although I understood that people stayed up 'til dawn enjoying themselves, the idea didn't appeal to me and so I headed home still in need of a story.

On a scale of one to ten, the entire Homecoming affair rated no better than a four. My impression was that student's fees could have been spent on something more worthwhile than a superficial popularity contest. It seems to me that most UNC-A students would have had their fill of such festivities after their senior proms in high school.



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