

Mayday

BY: LOYCE MARTINAZZI

The true origins of Mayday celebrations are lost in the mists of time, but traces of ancient festivals with playful frolicking around a pole, and the worship of beautiful spring flowers can still be found in parts of the world. Until the 1970s both Sherwood and Tigard High Schools celebrated Mayday each year by singing, dancing and crowning the loveliest young girl as May Queen. At Sherwood High, where I attended high school, I danced around the maypole almost every year. Our home EC teacher taught us to waltz around the center pole, holding a pastel colored ribbon. We had to dance carefully, keeping to the beat of a waltz which was played on the piano by a high school student. I loved it so much. Our teacher was strict about keeping to the beat of the music, and there was no frolicking allowed. We would weave the different colored ribbons into elaborate designs, winding them tightly around the pole, then reversing and winding out. The girls wore long pastel colored dresses, called "formals." At Tigard High the dances were less formal,

and the girls wore short dresses with saddle shoes and bobby sox or "flatties" as we called them. And they danced more freely. I guess you could say they got to frolic.

Nobody seems to remember when the Mayday custom died out in the area. Some think it's because sports began to take up a lot of time and interest for school kids; others say it was because of the pagan fertility rites overtones. When I was in third grade in the new brick school, our moms made white net tutus for us and we girls did a little dance carrying wooden hoops which were covered with pink crepe paper roses.

Tualatin always sent some sort of "act" to the Sherwood High May Fete. Singers, dancers and the like, and we usually all got out of class to attend the celebration. I was there to see Frances, Helen and Annita crowned May Queen.

We kids always made May baskets out of colored paper, filled them with flowers swiped from her yard, then hung the basket on our doorknob and ran and hid till mom came to answer the door and found her little gift. Ah, Mayday brings back lovely memories.



Frances Wager (Perry) was elected May Queen at Sherwood High School in 1947



Helen Wager (Koch) was crowned May Queen at Sherwood High School in 1948, one year later than her sister Frances



Annita Krause (Gillam) was crowned May Queen at Tigard High School in 1947, shown here with her court.



Maypole dancing at Tigard High School in 1947.



Bessie Roberts, Freddie Southard, yours truly, Ritchie Bacon, Toni Martinazzi danced the minuet at Sherwood High School May Fete about 1945.



Sam Keator's Irish dancers wound the Maypole on the Winona Grange lawn, May 1, 2009.