

The following 1945 Prom story was received recently from Dale Young, class of 1946:

The following is an email Dale sent to The Cleveland Plain Dealer a couple years ago when they asked for Prom memories, and they printed it.

"I betcha I'm the only 79-year-old GUY you'll be hearing from about Prom Night Memories."

"In the early 1940's, I attended Shortridge High School in Indianapolis, and it was rather unusual in several ways. It had a large student body, around 3,000, which was split between the rich northside kids and us lower- and middle-class depression survivors; it was noted for it's fine arts programs as well as it's sports teams. Also, and I have no idea how this idea ever started, but they had money making senior proms, open to the public! It was held at a huge ballroom with marble floors in the Murat Shrine Temple . The cost: \$4.00 . . . plus tax."

"I was a little nerdy, too short and skinny for athletics, was into drama and singing, but since I was also a sketch artist I had wormed my way into the jocks' cafeteria circle by doing caricatures of them and their girlfriends for the yearbook. Prom planning was under the sponsorship of the "Club 30", made up almost exclusively of the more prominent jocks and some other BMOC's. (No girls, of course.)"

"One day in April of '45, a few of the "Club 30" members turned to me at the lunch table and said, "There are a couple of bands that are gonna be near our area in June. Johnny Long (whom everyone knew of because of his hit "Shanty In Ole Shanty Town"), and he costs \$2100. The other guy is cheaper, only \$1800, but we never heard of him, have you? Somebody named Lionel Hampton."

"I was a jazz fan, so though Hampton had only recently started recording, I had heard his "Flyin' Home" and "Central Avenue Breakdown". (Couldn't afford to buy 'em.) So I said, "Get Lionel Hampton!!" To my amazement, they did."

"Another unusual aspect of our prom night was that the graduation ceremonies were held *that* evening, starting around 7:00 p.m. After diplomas were passed out around 9:00 or so, everyone went home to get dressed up, the dance started at midnight, ending at 4:00 a.m., then everyone went for breakfast."

"I was only a junior that year, and I've forgotten exactly why - probably financial - but I went alone."

"As you can imagine, it was one of those times that you can forever re-run in your memory like your own personal documentary."

"Naturally, soon after the band started, the "dancers" gradually stopped dancing and migrated toward the bandstand, to stand - well, stand isn't the word - with shining, mesmerized faces, just soaking in the big brassy sound and gut-thumping rhythms."

"Around 3:30 or so, the "Club 30" guys and their gals circulated among some of the more affluent attendees, took up a collection, and hired the band to play another hour."

"Hamp changed his soaking clothes three times during the five hours. It was the middle of June in Indianapolis, for God's sake, and I don't believe the Murat Temple was air conditioned, back then. During one of the breaks, I went backstage while he was changing, and offered him a swig of my Coke, which he accepted gratefully. Do you know how much I wish I'd saved that bottle?"

"Funny . . . I don't remember who we got for a band my senior year. Johnny Long, maybe."

Thank you, Dale, for a delightful story of your 1945 Prom experience.