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When I covered the Valentine's dance I was so distracted by the food served by a franchise house, I neglected the cast. Many of the honored were contemporaries from college and picnics out on the lake. So I rewrote the article and here is the way it turned out:

At the February Queen of Heart's Ball in San Angelo, all of the queens from 1955 on to the new century were brought back on the stage. From across the dance floor, their majesties looked beautiful. The earlier models revived memories of long-ago college dances and class picnics on the lakeshore. Deeper reverie into the past brought back shattered love, wrenching heartbreaks, and in many cases, new lives in new settings among new relationships.

Being able to gather the queens after all these years was a feat. Queens do outlive kings by wide margins. However, quite a number of the original consorts were present. Granted, the royal physiques asked a lot of a 2000 thread count cummerbund to hold in the sloping waistlines and put a terrific strain on eight-ply braces to keep their highness' tux pants above their royal paunches.

Queen Carolyn, representing a dinner and dance club, was heard to comment she was wearing the same evening gown she wore at her coronation in 1989. Subjects sitting at her highness' table deemed lucky to be able to tie on the same size apron they wore in 1989 reacted with a little deference

to royalty. "Queen C" most certainly lost support at tableside over staying so slim.

Her husband, Prince Ray of the Science Department of Angelo State University, relieved the tension by saying, "And, yes by damn, I wish she had stopped buying dresses then." Science professors are practical dressers, more given to lab coats and white smocks than flowering sequined gowns and low-cut, black beaded dresses imported from Dallas and the Northeast at precious conversion of a professor's salary.

The exciting part was seeing my contemporaries in a festive light instead of at the Doctors' Clinic on South Magadalen Street. One night off it was from monitoring the progress malignant cells made in West San Angelo last week, checking the roll of the waning heartbeats from the downtown Wellness Center, profiling and listing the arthritic joints and withering muscles on record at West Texas Rehabilitation Center to condense into a two-hour telephone call.

Once again fine ladies made a regal entrance up the ramp to a klieg-lighted stage for one glorious moment of attention in a shimmering silver background. For a few fleeting minutes, her grace was once again "Jackie O" or the svelte young model on the Virginia Slim ad. Maybe her old husband, Henry from "the House of Chump," or old Fred from "the House of Misfire," abdicated by order of the District Court, were no longer around. So what? Queens anoint new kings. Tonight just may be the dance where she is swept off

her feet again by a charming old dentist who once held her so tightly on the floor at her coronation ball that her crown wavered from the pressure.

The Graces and the Sires marched from sight after one last dance. As the evening ended, a lady at Prince C's table, where I was sitting, repeated a story about her grandson being ready to translate Shakespeare's sonnets to Latin verse for his fifth birthday party. Our eyes met and she paused. In instant recall, telepathy passed between us: "I won't finish this story, Monte, if you won't tell about the night Mother caught ..."

The white wine, you see, served at the bar of the Convention Center must come from a vineyard of repetition stock grapes, as its influence over grandparents' stories is mighty and sure ...