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Royal reminiscences

Alumnae recall their crowning moment

Years after being named Mizzou Homecoming queen, alumnae share how they reacted to the announcement, who crowned them, where they keep their tiaras and what makes Homecoming Mizzou’s iconic tradition.

Crowned by Faurot

“I have saved my crown all of these years (though I keep it in a drawer); it is a reminder of such a special time during my college days at the University of Missouri. I also still have the keys to St. Louis and Kansas City, Mo., that I received. My Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority sisters nominated me for Homecoming queen, and when I was elected to this honor, they created a scrapbook for me with all of the newspaper articles. Treasured memories!



Nancy Rich Gordon, BS Ed '71, keeps her crown from 1970 in a drawer. Photo by Rob Hill

“The governor of Missouri usually crowned the Homecoming queen, but he was out of town the day I was crowned. Coach Don Faurot stood in for the governor. What a thrill for me!

“During the era when I was crowned, we only had a Homecoming queen and no king. At halftime, a stage was pulled onto the 50-yard line. I was crowned and then spoke a few words to those in the stands. Then the queen and the attendants moved to a platform erected in the

end zone to watch the second half of the game. It was a very cold and blustery day but a great place to watch football.”

— 1970 Queen Nancy Rich Gordon, BS Ed '71 (In 1970, Gordon was also named one of “America’s Top Ten Homecoming Queens,” finishing as third runner-up in the national competition.)

No crown, no evidence

“It is with some regret that I report that female candidates in 1991, probably trying to defy what we thought were ‘princessy’ or pageant associations with the ‘queen’ title, urged the steering committee coordinators not to have the winners wear crowns. Now I have two daughters with tiaras all over my house, and I suspect they won’t believe I was ever queen of anything since I don’t have a crown to show for it. It never occurred to me that I might need a crown to prove to my kids that I was the Homecoming queen 20 years ago.”

— 1991 Queen Kimberly Yates, BA '92, JD '00

Queen without a date

“The Homecoming queen contestants were invited to an evening meeting at the Student Union to learn the results of the contest. I was told the meeting was for the contestants only. I invited my best girlfriend along to wait outside while the announcements were made. As I waited in the room, it began to fill with a large number of sorority sisters coming to cheer for their candidates. As the second and first runner-ups were announced, huge cheers rose from whichever sorority house the candidate represented. Big rounds of applause and whistles. When my name was announced as the winner, you could have heard a pin drop. It was silent ... until one or two sorority members gave a weak clap for me. As an independent, it was unexpected that I would win. After the announcements were made, the student body president prepared to present me with a charm bracelet. He asked me to gather my ‘group of friends’ around me for a picture for the newspaper. All I could do was open the door and ask my one friend, who was waiting outside, to come in and be my ‘fan club’ for the presentation.

“I must have been the only woman on campus without a date for Homecoming. There was no steady boyfriend in my life at that time, and men I had dated had all assumed that I certainly had a date for all the festivities. As my big day grew closer, the phone remained silent. Shortly before Homecoming, a football-player friend made an announcement in the ‘jock cafeteria’ one night that the Homecoming queen had no date for Homecoming. Thanks to him, the phone began to ring. As a result, the Homecoming queen finally got a date for her ‘big day.’”

— 1968 Queen Jan Barton, BS HE '71

Crowned by Crow

“I was surprised, honored and truly humbled to be crowned Homecoming queen. I was on Homecoming Steering Committee my sophomore and junior years, so I had participated in Homecoming from a different perspective than most students. Sheryl Crow was the grand marshal in 2003, so she crowned me. That was a unique experience because she was in my sorority, Kappa Alpha Theta, when she was a student. My grandparents and parents went to Mizzou, as did my brother, sister and husband, so Mizzou traditions have always been a part of our family. Homecoming is an exciting time on campus, and I loved being a part of that tradition.”



2003 Queen Abbie Turner Swisher received her crown from Grammy Award-winning musician Sheryl Crow, BS Ed '84. Photo by Rob Hill

— 2003 Queen Abbie Turner Swisher, BS Ed '04, M Ed '05

Homecoming in the '60s

“The whole college experience of the early sixties was a special time. Classes and tuition were both smaller; women had curfews every night and were allowed to wear slacks to class only when the temperatures were low. Everyone dressed up for football games: Men wore blazers and ties; women were in skirts, sweaters and heels — and most had a big mum corsage on their shoulder. Homecoming week also found the campus decked out as living units competed to see who could have the most elaborate house decoration, and students worked assiduously on floats for the Homecoming parade. It was a weeklong celebration of Tiger spirit, with alumni arriving to host their own reunion events. On game day, after the parade, the stadium was filled with students, alumni, professors, parents and local fans. The band was always in top form, and the stadium throbbed with excitement. It was an unimaginable thrill to be at the center of such festivity, and the memory of it remains keen.”

— 1963 Queen Willie Linsenbardt Wright, BJ '64

Unsteady crown

“I wish I had been allowed to keep the crown, but no such luck. I have a picture taken on that day of Gov. [James] Blair, Dean [Jack] Matthews, Don Wolff and me on the field. Gov. Blair placed the crown on sideways, so it was in danger of falling off during the entire ceremony. Sadly, my only piece of memorabilia is a trophy, which broke during a move. I did have a great

year as Homecoming queen because I represented our university in the Sugar Bowl — it was an anniversary year there. Also it was my honor to represent the Big Eight at the KU Relays the following spring. A lot of fun memories.”

— 1958 Queen Carol Earls Leach, BS Ed '62

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