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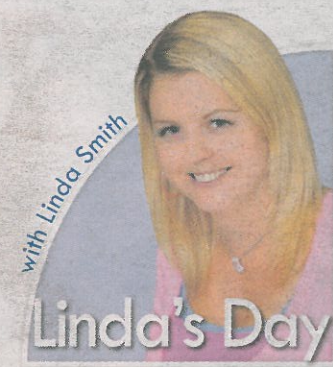
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Formal memories



ONE student turned up to his leavers' dinner recently in a Hummer with a cavalcade of nine Harley-Davidsons.

A budding horse trainer arrived at a function at Tattersalls Park on horseback, while others rocked up in helicopters, stretch limos, jet skis and Mack trucks.

Add to that the dresses – some cost as much as \$1000 – shoes, glamorous beauty regimens and professional photo shoots – and school formals have become big business.

It's a stark contrast to the distant leavers' dinner memories of some of Tasmania's most recognisable faces.

Performer John X arrived at his year 10 leavers' function in his dad's clunky old HG ute, with John and his date squashed in the front alongside dad.

Former radio announcer turned real estate agent Tori Hodgman hid under the table in horror at her formal because she was so embarrassed by the antics of her chaperone father, retired politician Michael Hodgman, who got on stage and sang with the band.

Education Minister Lin Thorp ate meat pies and drank softdrink while listening to records at her leavers' dinner, which was over by 9pm.

Other well-known Tasmanians recall wardrobe disasters, big hair and bad make-up.

One familiar face even destroyed her formal photos because she says they were just too hideous.

LIN THORP

LIN Thorp still has the aqua blue dress she wore to her Rosetta High School leavers' function in 1969.

She keeps the dress, along with other trinkets from her childhood including a school tie, Girl Guide belt and debutant flowers, in a treasure chest at home and jokes the items will help jog her memory when she's older.

"We ate meat pies and drank cans of softdrink and listened to records at a church hall on the Brooker Highway," Thorp recalls.

"The teachers were chaperones and we were home by 9pm."

JOHN X

THE Hobart performer hired a grey suit complete with top hat, tails, white gloves, cane, aqua cummerbund and bow tie for his year 10 Geilston Bay High School formal.

He describes his outfit as "pretty embarrassing" but says a surprising twist at the end of the night meant the evening was forever etched in his memory.



"The DJ played *Puttin' on the Ritz* and I ended up doing an impromptu routine with my hat and cane," he explains.

"People thought I had choreographed it – but I hadn't – and it brought the house down.

"I felt on top of the world after that



FLASHBACK: Lin Thorp with her formal dress from 1969.

number and in a way I suppose it launched my career."

WENDY KENNEDY

MEDIA personality Wendy Kennedy says her outfit for New Norfolk High School's 1976 leavers' dinner was so shocking she destroyed the photos.

"It was such a disastrous look that I destroyed the evidence – OMG horror show," Kennedy laughs.

A teenage tomboy with three older brothers, she says she had no idea how to put together an outfit for the function at The Hilltop in Granton.

"I wore the most hideous pale green long jersey dress with bat wing sleeves," she recalls.

"Of course I had green thickly applied eye shadow to match."

Her hairdo was so bad her mum screamed when she saw her.

TORI HODGMAN

ALL was going well at Tori Hodgman's 1984 year 12 Fahan School formal at Hadley's Hotel until the band started playing Wham's *Wake Me Up Before You Go Go*.

Her father Michael, a chaperone, got up on stage, grabbed a pair of wraparound sunnies and a tambourine and did his own rendition of the song.

Tori, who wore her mother's

"I was so embarrassed I hopped under the table"

— TORI HODGMAN

green Thai silk dress, complete with a mushroom hem and pale pink sash, was horrified.

"All of my friends thought it was really cool, but I was so embarrassed that I hopped under the table," the Hobart real estate agent recalls.

ANNA McMAHON

WIN TV presenter Anna McMahon reckons her year 12 Fahan School formal was an "unmitigated disaster".



Because she attended an all-girls school, boys were like "creatures from another planet".

And some of the fashion choices were questionable.

"Being the late '70s I remember a lot of particularly bad '70s fashion ... shiny synthetics, lurid colours, and for some reason we all seemed to have flowers pinned in our hair," she recalls.

She wore a slinky apple-green dress and she and her friends splurged on pampering – although, she says, nothing as flashy as many girls today.

"I had my first ever facial and sauna [at Wrest Point] and felt I was so grown up," she laughs.

"But another slight disaster ... I came out blotchy – not the look you are after for your big night."

RIS WILKINSON

FOR author Ris Wilkinson (who writes Mills and Boon novels under the name Melanie Milburne), the formal was a wonderful end to a tough time at high school.

She wore glasses, felt like an "ugly duckling" and struggled to fit in after changing schools in year 9.

But her long shimmery electric blue dress with a white satin collar – which she designed herself and convinced her best friend's mother to make – won praise from students

and teachers, who declared her "the belle of the ball".

"I was thrilled," she says.

She had her hair and make-up done and went with the pastor's son, her best mate.

"He had a girlfriend who lived in Adelaide so I just borrowed him for the night," she laughs.

"When he took me home at midnight we were saying goodbye at the front gate of my parents' farm [just chatting about how much fun the night had been].

"And then my father shone his Big Jim torch on us.

"He had a rifle under one arm [he usually did when the dogs starting barking] so it was a rather ignominious end to a wonderful night."

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