

Partying like it's 1945: Senior citizens relive prom in Coral Gables



Jack Miller, 89, and Joanie Marshall, 83, thank the crowd at a senior-citizen prom in Coral Gables on Thursday night. They were crowned prom king and queen, respectively. Shay Cohen Photography

There was no underage drinking. No hotel rooms were booked. And everyone got out by 9 p.m. sharp.

It was prom night — meant not for college-bound high-schoolers, but for senior citizens. And the majority of the 260 residents at The Palace Coral Gables Senior Living Community, dressed in ironed suits and elegant dresses, couldn't stop talking about it.

"I've never been to a prom in my life," said 83-year-old Joanie Marshall, the night's prom queen. She wore a black sequin dress and carried a bouquet of roses. And she was smiling. "I'm so happy, so excited to be here with all of you."



Residents of The Palace Coral Gables Senior Living Community dance during a senior-citizen prom held on Thursday.

Golden oldies pumped through the ballroom's speakers as couples shimmied across the dance floor, some of them joined by family members and caregivers. At one point, a small TV screen displayed scenes from "Dirty Dancing" as they danced to one of the movie's most recognizable songs, "(I've Had) The Time of My Life."

Thursday marked the Palace's second-annual senior prom, a night for residents to reminisce and relive their glory years. In the weeks leading up to it, high school was all they could talk about. And the day of, the ladies were nowhere to be found as they primped their hair and coordinated their makeup to their outfits.

"And tomorrow, and for the next few days, this is all they'll be talking about," said Pamela Parker, the Palace's social director.

For Jack Miller, the hip-shaking 89-year-old prom king, the night reminded him of the Clover Club in Miami, circa 1946. That was the venue and year of his high-school prom.

Look past his wrinkles and that pause in his step. He hasn't lost his moves. Thursday marked the first time he had danced since falling down and hurting his shoulder during a rendition of the jitter-bug last month. He's OK, he said.

"I feel the music."

He was voted king by a margin of one or two votes, but he said he may wear his crown wherever he goes for the next few days — otherwise, none of his peers would recognize him.

"They'll forget me tomorrow," he said.

Lee Adelson, an 88-year-old selected for the prestigious Prom Court, said the night flew in the face of senior stereotypes.

"It's wonderful," he said. "It keeps me young."

"I'm ready to go up, I'm tired," said his wife, Jackie, a few minutes before 9.

Adelson was still soaking in the night. He skipped his senior prom to take summer classes at the University of Illinois in 1945.



Prom King Jack Miller, 89, poses in front of his Prom Court during a senior-citizen prom in Coral Gables on Thursday.

"This is really my first prom," he said.

Evelyn Miller, the wife of the prom king, said it was nostalgic to dance to music she listened to in 1948 Philadelphia. Older age shouldn't be a deterrent to having a good time, she said.

"If you can do it, get up and dance," she said. "Some people even with their walkers get up and dance."

Parker said she was happy with the residents' approval, although the next few days may be spent recovering.

"They may be sore tomorrow, I don't know," she said.



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