

Singing in the Rain

In my yearbook, it's still 1954, exams over, Spring Carnival time. One sees the football fields tricked out like Tara, white columns, lit up, King, Queen, and court spread out before them. women seated, shining out of their strapless gowns, wide skirts billowing around them like the mouths of flowers. That year they wore for decorations broad-brimmed sunhats made of crepe paper and cardboard. The men stand behind in their white dinner jackets and string bow ties. Later they'll be a dance - but now it's started to rain, big-dropped, wind-driven, warm, spring rain.

I'm in the picture, on one wing with the entertainment, the Stephen Foster singers, a dozen women in two rows, a half dozen man behind. We're singing in the rain the men with grins on their faces. Some of the women grin, but Glenna looks ticked off and one can see the thick of splotches of water on her silk dress. Just after this picture was snapped we men will take off our white jackets and put them about the white shoulders of the women, and soon their hats will drip pink or purple or green on the white coats of our immaculateness. Mine came back with pink shoulders -- Mary Ann maybe? -- which no dry cleaner could ever remove, though, when I take it from my closet half-century later, I find the jacket has yellowed and the pink has faded at last.

I'm sitting in a fancy coffee shop brooding over all this. How handsome and beautiful we all were, how close it all seems. Surely it can't be that long ago -- a half century?

My thoughts are punctuated by the barista calling out the complicated nuances as of the modern cup of Joe.