

Historically Speaking.....

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Have Kappas always worn white at the General Convention business meetings and Memorial Service? No, pictures show the members of the Grand Council in Oxford gowns at the General Convention of 1896 at Evanston, Ill. Then in 1902 at Ann Arbor, Mich., the chapter delegates appear in caps and gowns. In 1930, alumnae association delegates, Province Officers, national chairmen and former Council officers were all in academic dress. In 1930, the Fraternity Officers wore hoods with facing and lining of the two blues, each with a gold embroidered emblem of office upon it. Today the emblem of office is no longer worn on the hood, but is worn on the left lapel of the gown with the badge.

By looking at pictures from the early Conventions, we can trace the tradition of wearing white to the business meetings. In 1896, the delegates wore white or light-colored blouses with long dark skirts. In 1898, the blouses are all white and again with long dark skirts. In 1900, there was a mixture of white long dresses and white blouses with the street length skirts. In 1902, white dresses can be seen under the dark Oxford gowns of the Fraternity Council and delegates. *The Key* in 1938 reported that “the delegates and officers will wear caps and gowns during the formal business sessions and the Memorial Service. Guests are urged to wear white dresses for the Memorial Service. Delegates and officers should plan for one or two white dresses to wear under her academic gown. White adds so much to the dignity of such dress.”

In 1952, *The Key* had sketches of “a well-dressed conventioneer: a dark sheer dress for travel, an evening dress for formal functions and afternoon dresses for informal affairs, a short jacket which may be worn if the evenings become chilly, the white dress for business sessions and Memorial Service and such sports clothes as the individual desires.” White dresses, skirts and blouses are currently worn by all Kappas attending the Opening and Closing Business Meetings and the Memorial Service.

What special meals have been held at Convention? As early as the 1938 Convention, the dinner the night everyone arrives has been a “Province Dinner.” Originally alumnae and collegians sat in the province where they were initiated. This was an opportunity to renew friendships between Kappa sisters who had not seen each other for years. In 2008, alumnae will sit with Kappas in the *province in which they currently live and collegians will sit in the province where their chapter is located*. At times a Heritage Dinner telling the story of Kappa’s founding was held, a Sweetheart Dinner or a Powdered Banquet in 1916. Singing has always added to the fun at the meals!

A custom that became difficult to observe as the number of chapters increased was of inviting each chapter delegate to the Grand Council table for a meal during the Convention. At Glacier National Park in 1922, the former Grand Presidents had a table and vied with the Council to entertain the active delegates. It was an inspiration for the delegates when Tade Hartsuff Kuhns had a table and told about Kappa’s early days.

In 1946, 13 former Grand Presidents were honored guests at the Convention. The first night’s dinner paid homage to the former leaders of our Fraternity. Even though they no longer guided the destiny of our organization, their love for it never wavered. This tradition of a dinner to honor former Fraternity Presidents continued until 2002. From 2002-2006 this tradition was changed to a Presidents Luncheon. In 2008, Fraternity President Denise Rugani, *UC Davis*, will honor the former Fraternity Presidents by returning to the tradition of a Presidents’ Dinner.

“**Convention** -- To those who have attended Convention before, the word brings a crowd of happy memories. Here we broke the bonds of our narrow chapter life and realized for the first time that we were a part of a great whole. We saw the power and scope of the Fraternity in the college world, and found that difficulties that were puzzling us had been met and solved by some chapter thousands of miles away. We formed friendships that will endure for a life-time. To those who have never attended, the word **Convention** rings with a note of promise. It may well be looked forward to with eager anticipation. Go to Convention, if possible. The Fraternity needs the help of your presence, and you need the rich experience Convention alone can give.” *The Key*, May 1908