

## Then and Now

# Shawntays Groovy Girls' Club

Meet the Shawntays, who were hip to the ways of fun and popularity.

By the time we hit high school, in 1965, girls' clubs whose uniforms had matching satin jackets, as immortalized in the movie *Grease* and the TV show *Happy Days*, were passé. In our club, we wore groovy matching sweatshirts (right).

We formed our own girls' social club, the Shawntays. Some of us had become impatient after we hadn't gotten into a club in our first semester at Verdugo Hills High School in Sunland-Tujunga, California.

The word Shawntay was an attempt by 15-year-old girls to sound both elegant and groovy at the same time. Enchanté was the root word (blame freshman French class). It made each girl "a shawntay," or enchanted.

At first, other clubs laughed at our club because we were all freshmen. That quickly changed when we started throwing the best dances—lots of them. John Desautels, brother of our club president, was in one band that played for us. John was a senior and voted "Best Looking" in his class. We also had the Strawberry Alarm Clock. That band later had the big hit *Incense and Peppermints*. We rocked!

Were girls' clubs popular back then? Only if you wanted to be popular, and what high school girl doesn't?

Top-secret criteria for being popular in the 1960s included: 1. Boys have to like you, but you have to have a good reputation. 2. Get passing grades, but don't be an egghead. 3. Own a "boss" car, or

have a cute boyfriend with one. 4. Have long, straight hair like Cher or a bubble hairdo like Sandra Dee. 5. Dance as well as Goldie Hawn. 6. Attend senior prom with your senior boyfriend, or have a cute boyfriend in college.

I used to think you also had to be good-looking to be popular, but looking back at old photos, I think self-confidence had more to do with it.

Our blond leader, Chris Desautels (aka Madam President), was so popular that if you had a choice to be Sandra Dee or Chris, you'd want to be Chris. All high school boys turned to Jell-O in her presence.

With the prettiest teeth and biggest hair in all of Sunland-Tujunga, Shirley Dumble was the girl the Shawntays always put up for queen at the Watermelon Festival, the biggest event in our twin cities.

Sadly, the only way to become queen was for your organization to sell the most tickets, and we were all too busy meeting boys and having slumber parties to ever bother selling tickets.

We did do some charity work and once got an award from Danny Thomas for holding a fund-raising dance for a children's hospital. Mostly, our money went toward renting a place at the beach for Easter week. One poor mother would chaperone 15 teenage girls, but we'd meet lots of boys.

The ultimate trip was to Bob's Big Boy in Van Nuys on Wednesday night (club night). Cars full of teens from all over southern California would be backed up for miles. Of course, we'd wear our club's matching yellow sweatshirts with "Shawntays" emblazoned in orange on the back.

We preferred to ride in Kim Wurl's car—The Orange Bomb—a '51 Ford that was painted Shawntay psychedelic orange with bright yel-

low, tuck-and-roll upholstery.

I can't speak for the other club members as to why we've remained friends over the years, even meeting en masse in Las Vegas for a reunion in 2005. For me, the friends I made in high school know who I really am. I can't put on airs because they call me on it. They keep me centered. They keep me real.

—By Linda Y., Oxnard, California