

Suburban Life

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Prom night

One evening magically provides enough memories for a lifetime

By Louise Okrutaky
staff writer

MEMORIES ARE MADE on a night like this. Cool yet comfortable, not a rain-drop in sight, it was a prom night strictly out of central casting.

For Karen Baers, graduating Harrison High School senior, the evening offered a last chance to socialize with classmates. One more time for farewells in a monthlong progression of graduation goodbyes.

In September she'll be a freshman at Northern Michigan University, majoring in law enforcement.

"It's a time to see your friends and say your final goodbyes," said Baers, as she sat next to her escort, Eric Held, in her family's Farmington Hills ranch home.

The couple have dated for about three months. About three weeks ago, Baers asked friend, Farmington High School class of '85 to go to the prom.

When she appeared Thursday evening looking radiant in a white dinner suit with a puffed skirt, no one would have dreamed that the preparations were, by prom standards, a last-minute effort. The entire ensemble, including earrings, shoes and lace gloves was purchased in 1½ hours, record time for any mother-daughter shopping expedition.

"WE BOTH had a good night's sleep. And we shopped in the morn-

ing," said Jan Baers.

Seeing their youngest child off to a senior prom marked a turning point in the family's life. As Karen and Held strolled down the driveway to his car, her father, Robert Baers, videotaped the moment before walking toward the grey car to make sure his daughter wore her seat belt.

After Mrs. Baer gave her daughter a goodbye peck on the cheek, she called to the departing couple, "Wear your seatbelt, Eric."

There were a few scheduled stops before the couple arrived at the Radisson Hotel, Southfield, where Harrison held its dinner/dance. First stop was a quick visit with Eric's father, Frank Held, busy at his backyard barbecue grill.

The next stop was in the parking lot of the T-Eleven on 10 Mile east of Middlebelt, where the couple met two friends who'd follow them to the Radisson. Within a few minutes, Karen's best friend, Shelley Durant, a Harrison senior arrived with her date, Chris Melms, Harrison class of '87. Durant's pink off-the-shoulder gown matched the pink cummerbund and bowtie worn by Melms.

By the time they reached the Radisson, prom ticket holders were lined up and ready when the ballroom opened at 6:30 p.m.

AS CLASSMATES and friends admired each others prom outfits, Wendy Poelke, a special education



Karen Baers and Eric Held are caught in a round of prom-night activities. Here, they pause a moment in the living room of the Baers' Farmington Hills home before leaving for the evening.



photos by RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Karen Baers and Eric Held are caught in a round of prom activities. At the beginning of the evening, they paused briefly in the living room of the Baers' Farmington Hills home (left). Karen (above) greets friends Doanna Ellinger, a senior, and Mark Space, an Eastern Michigan University student, in the Radisson Hotel, Southfield, where the Harrison High School prom was held. After dinner (right) the couple wait in line to have their portrait taken.



Jan Baers (above), Karen's mother, gives her a kiss before she leaves for the prom. Karen Baers and Eric Held (right) join others on the crowded dance floor.



Eric Held and Karen Baers chat during the prom night dinner. The \$60 prom ticket included dinner, dancing and unlimited soft drinks.

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