Tradition Revived:
Morrison Hall Hobo Dance Party

In the 1950s and 1960s, life was exciting at the University and in their free time students were occupied with sports championships and the craze of dance parties. The dance culture at HKU at that time was fuelled by the Annual Dance, the Union Dance, the Barn Dance at Ricci Hall and, of course, the *Hobo Dance at Morrison Hall.

Morrison Hall was the first HKU hall to hold a “themed” dance event after the reopening of the University in 1946; other halls and student groups followed suit later. Also known as the Mountaineers’ Ball in the early 1950s, the Hobo Dance was the highlighted event of the Morrisonian social calendar.

On June 26, 2016 at Loke Yew Hall, having prepared for over six months, young Morrisonians proudly presented the first Hobo Dance since 1968, when the old Morrison Hall was reluctantly closed down. They were also celebrating the 10+ anniversary of the rebuilding of Morrison Hall.

The Dance began with a welcome speech by PH Mak 麥伯雄 (BA 1967), President of the Morrison Hall Alumni Association, the War Cry, and a toast with the Guest of Honour, Professor Andy Hor, Vice-President and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research).

The programme included a parade by 3/F boys who danced and sang old-school traditional songs, the Morrison Hall Band show, and a performance by the hall choir, Morrisingers. A Hobo King and a Hobo Queen, the most “hobo” couple, were elected, just as it was in the past. The party reached its climax with the Scottish Ceilidh dance in which all participants danced together to a wild Scottish rhythm. The party attracted more than 200 members and friends of the University, all of whom thoroughly enjoyed being hoboes.

Chris Wong 黃智聰 (BSocSc 2011; MPhil 2014)
Joyce Zhang 張瑩 (PhD Year 5)

* Merriam-Webster Dictionary: Hobo is a homeless and usually penniless vagabond

"We prepared the Hobo Dance in December every year. The tickets were sold out quickly although they were probably the most expensive amongst student dance parties in those days. All attendees were in couples. The entrance was a dark tunnel large enough for two persons who had to spend at least 15 minutes on their hands and knees to go up the stairs leading to the dancing hall...Those were the good old days when we were young and carefree."

PH Mak 麥伯雄 (BA 1967)

"I looked forward to this day, the unique Hobo Dance Party in the best of Morrisonian traditions. When Morrisonians get together I can almost guarantee what the favourite topic of conversation will be: the Hobo Dance."

Dr Frank Yu 余宇楷 (MBBS 1959)

"The older generation, the middle and the younger ones can get together and have a good time, and make sure that the Morrisonian spirit will last forever."

Dr Laurence Hou 侯勵存 (MBBS 1957)

"We were always able to get the best live bands in Hong Kong at the time. I remember we had Teddy Robbin and the Play Boys one year (the Twist years) and the Fabulous Echos (the Mashed Potato dance craze year) in another year."

Dr Ho Lig-kang 何歷耕 (MBBS 1967)

"So pleased to witness the same strong Morrison spirit that I knew being brought back to life after almost 49 years since the last Hobo Dance in 1967."

Stephen Hui 許桂然 (BScEng 1970)

"I'm so excited to witness this event. It’s like a miracle that an old tradition of Morrison Hall can resurface at HKU like this."

Wong Sau-kit 王受傑 (BSc 2008; MScEng (IELM) 2011)

"This Hobo Dance Party is a very remarkable experience for us young Morrisonians to appreciate what Morrison Hall was 50 years ago. I am sure this is the best celebration of Morrison Hall's 10+ Anniversary for all Morrisonians."

Ricky Tam 譚嘉豪 (BBA(Acc&Fin) 2015)
Hobo Dance in the old Morrison Hall

It was called the “Hobo” Dance because Morrisonians would wear “Hobo” style clothing that was ragged and tattered. Morrison Hall would be decorated with paint, streamers, and wooden barrels. A truckload of hay would be strewn around the Common Room and Dining Room, the entrance and the staircase, taking advantage of the former Dairy Farm cowsheds nearby. The Morrisonians and their partners sat on the floor, covered with hay, chatting and indulged in the traditional music performed by the Morrison Band. At the end of the dance, a Hobo King and Hobo Queen would be "elected", and were deemed the “stars” of the Dance. And sometimes, romance was in the air with some Morrisonians and their guests becoming lifelong partners.