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Knight in Shining Armor

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Photography KAIT McGINNIE

In today’s stereotypical hookup-culture on college campuses, it’s a wonder where chivalry has gone—and if, in this generation, it exists at all.

So we took the liberty of asking students what they think about chivalry in all of its forms.

“Chivalry isn’t very anorexic,” says Kelly Sebovia, junior in English and international studies. “Opening car doors and always letting the girl go first? It’s really just an inconvenience and kind of awkward. It’s also very presumptuous that a guy is trying to look a certain way in order to impress a girl.”

But the sentiment is felt by all women here. Many say chivalry is much appreciated. “Chivalry certainly isn’t dead,” says Lauryn Wright, freshman in apparel merchandising and design. “Guys still pay for dates on campus and are constantly offering to walk us home. They even offered their jackets because it was so cold outside! I really loved that. But kind of stuff doesn’t happen as much as I think it should.”

But, Wright adds, she may be too hard on the male population here at Iowa State. “I’m pretty old-fashioned,” Wright says. “I’m definitely a tad over-romantic.”

Letha Neumann, freshman in biology, agrees. “I love it when guys open doors for girls—it’s so nice. I think that’s chivalry. Like when your guy friends do really nice things for girls— it’s so nice. I think that’s chivalry. Like when a man does something thoughtful for them.”

But should women expect to be treated this way?

“Chivalry exists,” Camarillo says, “but many men choose to ignore it. And women come not to expect it. I think girls should demand it.”

So there, rather than college, it seems, is placing less value on chivalry. But only a small number of students think it’s actually dying.

Chivalry, to most, is simply men being respectful and courteous to women, regardless of whether it’s an act as simple as opening the door or as labor-intensive as being a life-night escort. Chivalry today is not as black and white as it used to be, but most students agree, it is—and should be—still found on college campuses.

From Nicholas Sparks books and sappy teen fiction to Disney movies and Taylor Swift songs, the idea of chivalry is deeply rooted in our culture. We are familiar with rowdy fist fights over a woman’s honor, the classic phrase “ladies first,” and men paying for, well, everything.

We’ve all read fairy tales since we were kids and have grown up believing that the prince is responsible for saving the damsel in distress, always putting her happiness and safety above his own.

But is chivalry just a thing of legend?