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Albany Oregon 97321

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Looking Back: Recalling first date

BY JACK GILLESPIE
MUSEUM MEMBER

It was the fall of 1945. The people of Albany joined the rest of the world with a giant sigh of relief as World War II had come to an end.

And I had my first date.

My friend Bob and I finally, after hours of rehearsals, got up the nerve to ask two girls from our 9th grade class at Central School for a date — and both said yes. Bernice would be my date and Barbara would be Bob's.

(Albany, at this time, had a three year high school — 10th, 11th and 12th grades. Ninth graders or freshmen went to Central School.)

We all agreed on attending a high school football game the coming Friday night.

The Albany Bulldogs played their home games at Hudson Field in back of Central School on Ninth Avenue. Black weather-worn covered wooden bleachers (built in 1915) ran east and west on both sides of the field. The larger of the two bleachers, for the home team rooters, was located on the north side of the field. Those rooting for the opponents sat in the smaller south bleachers, a track field wrapped around the football field.

Come "date night" I ran through my downtown Albany Democrat-Herald paper route and then sped home on my Western Auto bicycle to

my home on south Marion Street, where I had supper and spruced up.

I then hopped on my bike and pedaled to Bob's home a few blocks north on Jackson Street. He was ready to go and away we flew down Jackson to the railroad tracks where we lifted our bikes over the tracks and headed for Baker Street to the house where Bernice lived with her grandparents (now a parking lot).

We dropped our bikes on the lawn under the trees and walked up the steps to the porch. We rang the doorbell and Bernice and Barbara answered and invited us in to meet Bernice's grandparents. They were real nice and we chatted a bit and then the four of us began our seven-block walk to the football field.

We were seated for the opening kickoff at 8 p.m. During the game we had popcorn and soft drinks as we rooted with the Bulldog cheerleaders. The game ended about 9:30 and we walked the girls back to Baker Street before the 10 p.m. curfew horn bellowed a warning that all minors should be home or heading for home.

The four of us would go to movies together during the rest of the school year. After the fall school year began at the high school, we never dated again. But we remained good friends over the years and enjoyed "looking back."