

## MILDRED

By: Gus Dick Andros

While getting ready to attend my fiftieth High School Reunion, I've tried to think of what it meant to be at Central. Two names that came to my mind were Bill and Mildred the most important people in my life while I was in High school. Unfortunately neither would be able to attend, because Bill is no longer with us, and Mildred never attended Central High School.

Mildred and I were classmates in Junior High and our relationship started as members of the glee club. I am sure that we talked about how much we liked to dance. Dating at that age was out of the question, but we were allowed to go to a dancing school that taught ballroom dancing and the school had an open dance period after the class. I was very fat and Mildred was considered a beauty. She was more sophisticated than I, and I am sure she had had boys chasing her all of her life. The thing I had going for me was I was the best dancer in the school. Lots of girls wanted to dance with me, but none wanted to go out with me. Mildred overlooked the fact that I was unattractive and we went dancing every Friday and Saturday. We never kissed or held hands.

At that time in my life I had no affection shown me at home or at school. I have always said that if a grizzly bear would have hugged me I would have gone to it's den and lived happily ever after. I never expected Mildred to love me, but I loved her, so much that while she was working at the movie theater selling tickets I would stand across the street and watch her. On rare occasions I would act like I was walking by and stop just to talk with her.

When it was time for us to go to High School I went to Central and She went to Northeast High School. Northeast was a new school and Mildred was in its first year. We still went to the dancing school every weekend. By that time she had begun to date, but there was no one for me. Between 10th and the 11th grade I went on a restrictive diet and lost a third of my body weight. No one will ever know the difference this made in my life.

Mildred attitude toward me changed dramatically. We now held hands and kissed. What I knew about kissing I learned from my cat. I soon had full use of the family car and we would spend hours necking in front of her house. I remember Mildred's mother well, as it got later in the evening her mother would say, "Mildred, it's time to come in." Ten minutes later it would be, "Mildred you have school tomorrow." We knew that gave us another ten minutes and then in voice that could be heard throughout the neighborhood, "Gus! go home!" This happened every date I had with her. One night a police car pulled up along side us and gave us a warning to move on. This frightened us, but didn't stop us.

Because my mother knew Mildred from the dancing school, she invited Mildred to all our big family dinners. My mother and Aunts liked Mildred because she was so smart and

worked to make her own spending money. Mildred lived with her mother and father, an older sister that always made suggestive remarks about the hair on my chest. Most 16 year olds did not sport hair on their chest. Her younger brother never spoke to me or anybody else. I was never invited to eat at their house. At that time many families did not have the food to spare. I don't want to imply they were impoverished, but the depression was not an easy time.

Although Mildred went to another school she was well known at Central because she was my steady. At parties and movies where we dated in two or three different cars Mildred and I were a couple. I am sure that some people didn't know that she went to another school. I was very active in school and was in charge of the Junior and Senior Prom. I worked night and day to make it a big success. The faculty sponsors were amazed at my capabilities to organize this larger than large event. I never said anything to the faculty about not attending the Prom because Mildred, an outsider. Was not allowed to go. About three days before the Prom I was called into the Principal's office. "Gus, I want to congratulate you on your work to make the Prom a big success," Mr. Born said.

"Thank you, Sir. It was fun and I enjoyed every part of it," was my reply.

"Word has gotten back to me that you are not going. Would you like to tell me why?"

"Well Sir, I have been going steady with a girl from Northeast High, and I couldn't date another girl, but her."

"Are you telling me that you would sacrifice your prom that you have worked so hard to make possible, because you can't take your girlfriend?"

"It's not like I am giving up my life, Sir. I just know I couldn't enjoy myself knowing she was home alone," I said gallantly.

"Gus, you will never cease to amaze me. Sometimes you can be such a pain and at other times you show maturity way beyond your years." Mr. Born had caught me more than once breaking the rules of the school.

"The junior class sponsors have pestered me into agreeing that you should be allowed to bring this girl to Central's Junior and Senior Prom."

"Really!" I was thrilled. "I could kiss you."

"Please don't, but let me say the less said of this the better." With that remark he dismissed me. The only person I told was my friend Bill. I always felt that he was the one that told the teachers that I did not intend to go to the Prom. Mildred was the first person to go to the Prom that wasn't a student at Central.

Mildred was very smart, and could play the piano so well that she would accompany to choir even in Junior High, so it was not a surprise that Mildred went to summer school so

she could graduate early and attend college in the fall. While Mildred was in summer school and I was working for the natural gas company, I would drive by the school, and give Mildred our special signal on the horn. This happened everyday at the same time and soon everyone in class would expect it. One day I missed for reasons I can't remember, but Mildred told me later that the teacher said she had missed to horn.

I was hurt that she decided to leave the City to go away to college. At first we agreed that it would not change our relationship. But at every school activity I was alone and I was not used to that. Finally it was understood that I could take some of our close friends to School functions. I spent more time than usual with my friends Bill and Robert. I know Mildred and I did not fight, but we thought it would be better for both of us not to go steady in this long distant romance.

"You are a chicken shit," my friend Robert would say, who also loved her.

"I know that, but I should be able to date who I want and so should Mildred," I would argue.

"She loves you and you love her so you can still go steady." Robert said knowing now that he would not get to see her at all.

"Robert, my dear friend! It is as much her idea as mine. So knock it off."

Bill who also liked Mildred never interfered. It meant that we could be together more and date the same girls. Neither one of us had to worry about getting a dates. Men really have it easier than women when it comes to inviting someone out. I dated Martha, Helen, Charlotte, and many more. What I missed most was some one that was as good a dancer as Mildred. I would still go to the dancing school to attend the open dance. My mother worked there and I got in free. Kathleen Johnston and Doris Nelander were great dancers, I didn't date them, but they were always at the dance school. Doris was tall, almost as tall I was in flats. When the senior prom came around again I was confused on whom to take. All of the girls I dated could get a date anytime they wanted, but Doris being so tall had a problem.

I did the unbelievable. I invited Doris to the Prom, and everyone thought I had lost my mind. She wasn't active in school and few knew who she was. At the Prom, Doris and I cleared the floor two or three times. While sitting at our table she said, "Are you sorry that you brought me?"

I was stunned by the question and the only thing I could say is, "Look we clear that floor and mopped up everybody else."

Helen never dated me again and I went off to college.

Mildred and I stayed in contact and when she came home we still dated and it was always

like old times. Some weekends she would come to Oklahoma University for a college event.

One day she called me to say that she was getting married to a Lieutenant in the army. I was happy for her, because a new girl and a real love had come into my life, Betty Ward. It was at Mildred's request that we have one more date before she got married. The week of her wedding we went out and we necked into the wee hours of the morning.

At the wedding I think there were more eyes on me than the groom. Everyone there knew that Mildred and I had gone together longer than most marriages.

I lost touch with Mildred after her marriage, until I was home on a visit forty years later and I met my brother's new girl friend. She said that she was Mildred's roommate at college and she informed me that Mildred had said many times that the greatest love of her life was me, excluding her husband. They are still together. I have not been as lucky.