

First Graduation

By Molly Hegman

You are cordially invited to St. Stephen School's Eighth Grade Graduation.

What an exciting evening that was! I felt so mature and convinced that I was ready to go places! All of the girls wore beautiful white dresses. The boys wore shirts and ties. With all this finery we still had to walk a plank that was temporarily being used for stairs as the church was being remodeled. We ignored the plank and walked proudly to our seats. The details of the ceremony have long since become lost in my memory but I do remember the plank and what took place after the ceremony.

Our parents were great about letting us feel grown up for the evening. This evening might be considered my first date though actually it was a double date. Tom and Herman asked June and me to go to the movies with them. I couldn't believe it when my parents agreed to this. It helped that we could walk to the theatre and Tom's parents said they would bring us home. We were really on our way to high school fun!

The funny thing about this was that Tom had a crush on me. I had a crush on Herman. Herman had a crush on June. But June had a crush on Bobby who was not with us.

I guess I was considered Tom's date and June was with Herman. It was a sign of the times that the guys had it their way. We did get a say in the movie. It was *Young Queen Bess*.

On that lovely May evening the scent of spring flowers filled the crisp air. As we walked along I felt Tom's hand enfold mine. What a wonderful feeling that was. I looked at him and smiled. We held hands all the way to the theatre and all through the movie ... except when he was getting Hershey bars out of his pocket. They fed us candy bars all during the movie. It sounds pretty tame now but at the time it was the most exciting thing that had ever happened to us.

When we began high school Tom, Herman and I were in most of the same classes. Although we all developed new friendships when Senior Prom time came Tom invited me to be his date. We double-dated with Herman and Barbara. We all danced to the strains of *Almost Paradise*.

The three of us went to different parts of the country for college but we all stayed in touch. Over the years we have seen each other in Pensacola. Tom and his wife, Kay, would go out with us or have us over for dinner when we visited my family.

When our class began having reunions in Pensacola we were together again. We will be together again in April for another reunion. I look forward to being together but it won't be as exciting as that first time holding hands with Tom.