

Teenager Takes His Great-Grandmother to Prom

Delores Dennison never went to her high school prom.

Times were tough. Money was scarce—just enough for the necessities.

But if she had gone to the prom, Delores might have imagined wearing a lovely dress and promenading through a sea of balloons and dancing with a handsome young man on a crisp April evening. She might have imagined the band playing the Frank Sinatra song “How I Love the Kisses of Dolores.”

But the days of promenades have long passed for Delores, now 89 years old. Youth and vigor have given way to heart trouble and a stroke. And the handsome young man who became the love of her life—the man who used to sing to her that Frank Sinatra song—passed away many years ago.

A few months back, Delores received a telephone call from her great-grandson. Austin is 19 years old, a senior at Parkway High School in Rockford, Ohio. And he had a very important question for his “Granny DD.”

“I asked her if she would be my prom date,” Austin told me. “How cool would it be to take my great-grandmother to prom?”

Now, Austin Dennison is the kind of fellow who looks like he just stepped out of central casting. He’s the sort of kid a dad hopes his daughter would marry.

He’s an Eagle Scout who plays for the school’s football, baseball and basketball teams. He plays in the school band and faithfully attends church. He’s the kind of youngster who says “Yes, sir” and “Yes, ma’am.” He’s the kind of young man who respects his elders.

Still, the proposal took Delores by surprise. It's not every day your great-grandson asks you out to prom.

"He was so sweet and adamant about it," Delores told me. "I asked him, 'But are you sure that you wouldn't like to take one of the young ladies who could get out there and do everything with you?' He said no. 'I want you.'"

Before we continue, you might want to grab a box of tissues.

Austin drew his inspiration from his economics teacher. The teacher's older brother had taken his grandmother to prom. Austin remembered that his own Granny DD had never been, so he picked up the phone and made the call.

"I couldn't disappoint him—if I had to go on my hands and knees," Delores said.

"At first she was a bit resistant," Austin said. "I assured her I was serious and she finally said yes. It was my privilege to take her."

But there was much, much work to be done. The first item of business was finding a suitable dress for the big night.

"That was an adventure," Delores said. "We were looking at the young girls' dresses. None of those dresses would be OK for me."

Let's just say young ladies don't dress like they did back in the 1930s.

"They were either too high or too low, and I didn't want any of that," Delores said.

Eventually she settled on a pretty blue dress and a clutch purse.

"The purse was for my necessities—my nitro and my puffer that I use for breathing," she said.

The night of the prom was magical. Austin serenaded his great-grandmother with a special song and presented her with a pearl necklace.

His father chauffeured them to an elegant dinner at the local Bob Evans.

"That's one of her favorite places," Austin said.

He ordered the pancakes. She ordered an omelette.

"I had to take some of it home," Delores confessed.

Afterward, it was off to the high school, where Austin and his lovely date were introduced at the promenade.

"We got a standing ovation," he said. "But we had to cut across the dance floor because she didn't have enough energy."

Delores managed to get a few laughs as she hit the balloons with her cane.

"It was wonderful, and I just loved all the girls in their fancy gowns and the gentlemen in their tuxedos. It was quite a night," she said. "Everyone there just could not have been more polite. Everyone got an A+."

One of Austin's friends even tried to make a move on Austin's grandmother.

"He tried to cut in," Austin said with a good-natured laugh. "He asked for a dance, but she didn't have the energy."

And her date? Well, she declared, "He was a perfect gentleman. He was everything you would expect of a young man."

"I respect my elders greatly," he told me. "They have a great influence on my life. To be able to sit down and talk to them and learn from them and their experiences is a great thing."

But Austin had one more surprise waiting for his great-

grandmother. As he escorted her onto the dance floor, a tune from another time filled the gymnasium. It was that song from a long time ago.

How I love the kisses of Dolores ...

"I chose that song because Grandpa Ed used to sing that song to her," Austin said. "We shared that dance. It was really sweet."

What a break if I could make Dolores mine, all mine ...

And that's the story of how Delores Dennison went to prom. She wore a lovely dress and promenaded through a sea of balloons and danced with a handsome young man on a crisp April evening. And all the while, the band played on.

How I love the kisses of Dolores ...

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