

## TURKEY DAY ONCE MEANT A FOOTBALL SHOWDOWN IN THE GILA VALLEY

Long before NFL games were shown on the TV, and TV itself, one had to get in his vehicle or walk down the road to the local football field to see a football game.

During those days there was an exciting football game held in the Gila Valley on Thanksgiving day. This was an annual tradition. For many years, how many I cannot say, the main event of Thanksgiving Day, that is after the big turkey and all the trimmings were consumed, was to watch the BIG FOOTBALLSHOWDOWN between **Safford** and **Thatcher**; or depending where you were from, between **Thatcher** and **Safford**.

The event began about 2 pm so it was a rush to get the food "et" and get to the field, but as some of the stadiums did not have lighting, it had to be held in the early afternoon. Often those games would go on until dusk.

The rivalry between the two schools has always been intense, to say the least; the cheering was loud, and the game very exciting! The spectators received their money's worth every time. I don't know when this tradition ended, but I can share a photo taken in 1955 showing part of the halftime presentation put on by the Thatcher High School Band.



Turkey Day Game: Nov. 24, 1955 Thatcher, Arizona

I was told recently this football game held on Thanksgiving Day was discontinued in the late 50's or early 60's.

Here is an additional picture of the Safford High Band practicing for their half-time presentation. One can see the back of the old junior high school as well as the gymnasium to the left. At one time in the 50's there were over 80 participants in the band.



Safford Band practicing for their presentation

Although these two teams still play each other, it is during the regular football season. I hear, though, there are still a few fights occasionally. That is a tradition that will continue onward, I am afraid and one we could do without.

Submitted by Sue Dette Crandall Reed