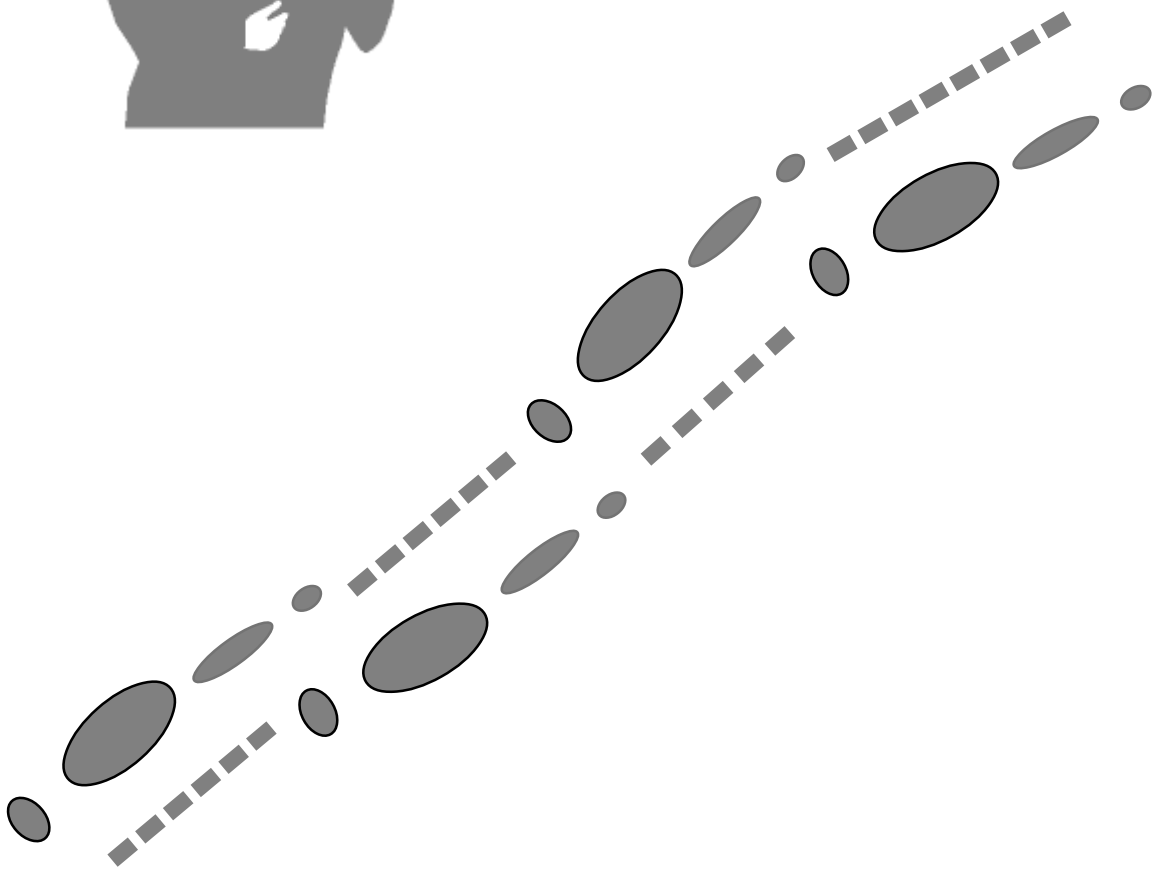


Dancing



Dancing is a publication of Lifescapes, a life writing program sponsored by the University of Nevada Department of English, the Washoe County Libraries, and the Nevada Humanities Committee.

Dancing was conceived at the Sierra View Library meeting of Lifescapes and was done as a collaborative project of the Sierra View and Northwest Reno library branches. It grew from a collective realization that dancing plays a major role in just about everyone's life. The stories here show the importance and value of dancing for the young as well as the not-quite-young.



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Dancing

Therapy, Best Exercise, and Fun

Lourdes Agcaoili

There is a belief in the Filipino culture that if you have a mole on your feet, you will become a good walker and/or dancer. I believe I fall under the latter category. I happen to have a mole on my small left toe, and I do love dancing.

Having been born in the 1930s and grown up in Baguio City, Philippines, I can recall no dancing schools for either ballet, tap, or modern dance. If there had been, my parents would not have been able to send me to one anyway. We were not poor, but there were ten mouths to feed beside my parents and my grandmother. In addition, I was already taking piano lessons, which to me were boring. I preferred being on the move to sitting for an hour pounding on black and white keys.

When I reached my teenage years, thirteen to be exact, a group of my friends and I formed a club, which we christened "Hep Keen Teen," and started to learn to dance. Our very first dance instructor was Victor Valdez, a U.S. Navy friend, who was home on vacation. He claimed he learned his dancing skills after com-

ing out of boot camp, and for want of something to do, on his off duty or weekends, he and his friends frequented the bars and dance saloons.

Some of the dances Victor taught us were the Slow Drag, Waltz, Fox Trot, Boogie-Woogie, Jitterbug, Rumba, and Polka. We learned tango from another dancer friend, Narcisco Gatchalian, whom we considered the Fred Astair of our time. He later became our permanent chaperone and escort so that we would not become wallflowers.

During that time, television was not yet available in the Philippines; therefore, we had no means of learning any dance steps, except to learn from each other. The only luxuries we had were the phonograph and, of course, jukeboxes, which were also very popular in those days. We must have deposited most of our meager allowances in these fun machines.

Our teen club members organized jam sessions by putting all our resources together so that we could display and flaunt our newly acquired talents. We were, in turn, invited to even more shindigs (dance parties) by other groups. We were so

The nuns called dancing “an instrument of the devil to make us commit sins.”

popular in those days, feeling like the “Belles of the Ball” and must have gone to dances just about every weekend, to the chagrin of the nuns at the school. I went to Holy Family College, a convent school run by Belgian nuns. The nuns called dancing “an instrument of the devil to make us commit sins.” Even the waltz was considered vulgar and obscene by most religious leaders because of its close body hold. At any rate, we kept our dance parties secret and ostracized those we suspected would be possible snitches. In spite of our surreptitiously keeping our dances under raps, the nuns seemed to have their way of knowing. Come Monday mornings—after a weekend of dance parties—we would be summoned to Mother Superior’s office and reprimanded. However, those reprimands fell on deaf ears. The partying and dancing were carried on. Luckily the nuns did not threaten us with expulsion.

When Elvis Presley became famous, and television finally penetrated almost every household, the nuns reinforced their campaign against dancing and once again went up in arms to condemn Elvis and his lascivious and provocative dancing. They dubbed him, “The Devil Incarnate.” They also told us that if we danced to his music or watched him on TV, our eyes and minds would be corrupted. As far as the nuns were

concerned, we would be doomed to hell if we did not listen to their warnings.

Those may have been the beginning of our rebellious years. We defied everything the nuns told us and went on our merry and happy-go-lucky ways. We danced until we dropped, sort of. Luckily, our parents were not against dancing, provided we *did not* fail in our grades and *did* let them know with whom and where we were partying. I have, on several occasions, hosted jam sessions in my own home, chaperoned by my parents, and we all had a wonderful time.

As a youth, I suffered from a terrible asthma condition. I soon discovered, however, that dancing was my best therapy. Whenever I had a severe attack and was invited to a party, I would not skip it even if it killed me. I would bundle myself up as warm as I could and take off with the gang. There were times when my parents refused to let me go out, but I escaped after waiting for my parents to retire into their bedroom. I made sure of taking my medication first and then pretended to go to bed. Actually I was fixing up my bed to make it look like I was lying in it. Then, with the assistance of my friends, I would toss my change of clothes, shoes, and all out my bedroom window to their waiting arms. As soon as I saw the lights go out in my parents’ bedroom, I slowly tiptoed down the stairs,

I slowly tiptoed down the stairs, stealthily opened the front door, and dashed off to the waiting car parked on the street corner.

stealthily opened the front door, and dashed off to the waiting car parked on the street corner.

When we got to a party, I usually waited until the wheezing in my chest subsided; then I was ready for the dance floor. After a few rounds of Boogie, my lungs would seem to miraculously clear up with the asthma dissipated. Had the wheezing not improved, I would have been upset and dreaded the thought of having to go home to be confined in bed for days, with my parents reproaching me and saying, "What did I tell you . . . da dah da, dah." But fortunately, it never happened, and I got well every time. I always said, "My asthma is sociable, it does not want to be cooped up."

After graduating from high school I went on to college in Manila, Philippines, and enrolled at the University of Santo Tomas (Saint Thomas Aquinas). I thought my socializing days were over, but on the contrary, they escalated instead. As I met new friends and learned more new dances, I was invited to more parties than ever before. Luckily my grades did not suffer much as a result of all the partying. Although I started out in the college of medicine, I eventually shifted to business administration and graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1956.

To this date, almost fifty years later, I still have not given up dancing. As a matter of fact, I even joined a

ballroom dancing class for senior citizens in spite of a sciatica problem in my right leg. Aside from learning the latest dance crazes, I also learned to dance the Filipino folk dance. The Filipinos are a fun-loving people, and they believe that dancing is a natural form of expression and a form of stress relief, so whenever an opportunity to go out dancing presents itself, I do not hesitate.

When I purposefully stayed away from dancing, I noticed a weight gain, which to this day I have difficulty shedding. Therefore, I believe and highly recommend that dancing is the best form of exercise and the best therapy for whatever ails you. Not only that, I find it the best way to interact with other people and pick their brains. It is never too late to start. I would say go for it! There are classes for seniors everywhere. Check with your nearest senior community center. There is no excuse for not being fit, healthy, and happy. Try it; you'll be glad you did!



Lourdes Agacoili was born February 25, 1935 in Baguio City, Philippines. She was the second of ten children of Pedro Agacoili and Mary Agacoili. She immigrated to the U.S. in 1971 and settled in the Bay

There is no excuse for not being fit, healthy, and happy.

Area until 1998, after retiring from United Airlines. She has lived in Reno since then. Lourdes has two grown children and six grandchildren. She has been active in community and spiritual undertakings in California as well as Reno.





Dancing

Irish Dancing

Charlotte O’Ryan

Irish dance is definitely a mans’ dance: danced with muscle and vigor and a challenge in the masculine eye. Add to that a flip of the skirt, a bit of skin, and flirtatious bouncing curls and flashing eyes, and you have a combination lethal enough to frighten the sandals off the very suppressive Catholic clergy.

There is speculation that foot-stomping dance began with the Celts thousands of years ago, when the wild eyed bushy haired naked warriors stomped their feet, banged their chests, and bellowed curses in order to frighten their enemies into flight. It worked very well, as these ferocious hordes overran much of northern Europe and took Rome. The Celts, being of an outgoing and gregarious nature, spread their dance, their culture, and their seed generously before moving on. As mercenaries, they thundered into Greece, China, and India, as well as Egypt. One of their leaders even married a Pharaoh’s daughter, Scota. Each victory was followed by feasting, drinking, boisterous chest pounding, foot stomping, and tales of personal

heroism and fantastic prowess on the battlefield, much as it would be today worldwide after a soccer, football, or basketball win.

As the Celtic mercenaries lost power, they left behind their foot-stomp dances. Many Celts who had settled in these new lands began a Western migration. From Egypt they took the Pharaoh’s daughter, Scota, who gave her name to the Scots, who later became the Irish. From the East, they took a taste of mystic religion. They left in Greece and Italy the foundation for their wonderful foot-stomping folk dances, and took with them the kilt and the bagpipe. They moved west through Spain leaving the Flamenco, and those crossing the Russian steppes from China left behind the brilliant dance of the Cossack. Generation after generation, pursued by Roman armies, the Celts moved west. With only a few strongholds left, they reached Eire. For hundreds of years, battle dance was seen through petty kings, high kings, heroes, and villains, until a sort of peace came to the land. The population took up agriculture but held onto the foot-stomping dance of

There were people drinking and couples going off into the fields and doing what comes naturally . . . scandalous.

their ancestors. Young men and women came from the countryside for miles around on festive occasions to dance the reels and stomp their feet to fiddles and pipes and to swing the ladies to the dances that came to America in the form of Barn Dance and Square Dance, as the Irish continued to move west.

At the crossroads, at wakes and weddings, and at various Pagan/Christian holidays, there was still wild dancing and lascivious conduct, which the church moved to put a stop to. Men hammered nails into the bottoms of their shoes to enhance the sound. Women kicked their legs up in the excitement of the dance. There were people drinking and couples going off into the fields and doing what comes naturally: scandalous. The church took control of the dance. They moved it into church basements, where the clergy could keep everything under control and the doors locked. (This was before Bingo.) "Arms stiffly at your sides; don't touch your partner; and over there, lower your eyes and stop your smiling!" Even with all the restrictions, the church was the place to go to socialize and dance. A few generations into this structure the Feis came into being.

In dancing competitions the Feis had very strict guidelines. The dancer must still keep the stiff posture, arms to the side, face calm, showing no

emotion. Boys dressed in kilts, girls in an elaborate folk costume with bouncing curls. The dancers trained continuously for years for these competitions, usually beginning lessons at three or four years of age. To win a competition in your age group was the high point of the year for the family, and everyone moved on to the next competition, year after year, until the dancer became an adult and eventually retired from competition. The only place for these incredibly well trained dancers to earn a living at what they did best and loved most was to teach.

In 1994 this changed with the advent of the interval act during the Eurovision song contest that is broadcast to three-hundred million people across most of Europe. In previous years, this song competition had given the world Abba and U2, but that year no one can remember who won. That year an Irish-American from Chicago leaped out onto the stage, arms flying, kicking over his head, with a wicked grin on his face. He brought down the house and sent shockwaves through Europe, scandalizing the Irish dance community and creating Riverdance. He followed that up with Lord of the Dance, and then "Feet of Flames."

Irish dance is now a world phenomenon with eleven different dance shows, with some shows having more than one troupe on the road, with a total of fifteen on tour now. Talented Irish dancers now have a future in

An Irish-American from Chicago leaped out onto the stage, arms flying, kicking over his head, with a wicked grin on his face

dance with 600 to 1000 working in shows they never dreamed possible a few short years ago. All the people involved with the shows credit their success to Michael Flatly, and his genius, that changed Irish dance forever.

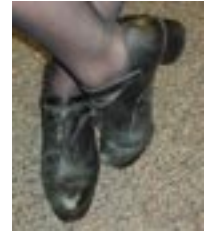


Charlotte's Irish dancing "hard" shoes (also pictured to the right on her dancing feet). Note the contemporary touch: fiberglass toes and heels.



Charlotte O'Ryan is a third generation Nevada, educated at the University of Nevada, Reno. She became interested

in Irish dance as a result of a video on Public Broadcasting: "Lord of the Dance," starring Michael Flatley. Inspired to take Irish dance lessons, she has visited the old sod twice and gathered anecdotal legends on the beginnings of Irish dance.







Dancing

The Sun Dance

Constance Walters

Dance. The very word brings visions of joy. Bodies whirl and move to the rhythm of musical instruments, which create a carefree mood. Life is good and without pain unless you're improperly shod.

Dance is a give and take of stepping and whirling, of dipping and swaying, of lead and follow. It's a spontaneous innovation, shared excitement, a means of communicating without words, an exchange of moods, an unspoken appreciation. It's all together wishful and wonderful being perfectly attuned to someone else for an almost magical time. It is rife with the promise of happiness, for now at least.

But dance also has a dark side.

The Pauites had dances that spoke of cruelty. Old Winnemucca was dying and wished to take his young wife and baby with him to the Happy Hunting Ground. The poor hapless young woman, baby in arms, was taken to the center of a large circular clearing in the sagebrush where she was tied to a low stump. Over to one side was a pile of baseball-sized rocks. The dance began around

the perimeter of the circle with each turn gradually drawing closer to the victim. Finally one brave stepped to the center, made a speech, wrested the baby from its mother's arms and dashed its head on a large rock. The dance continued with the lead dancer picking a rock from the pile and throwing it at the squaw, crushing her side. Each dancer in turn, as he reached the pile, pelted her until finally she was on the ground, dying from her wounds. One of the braves then killed her by crushing her skull. When Winnemucca was informed of the results of the dance, he turned over on his side and within two days was dead.

Frederick Remington, the artist, sculptor, and writer, speaks of the dances practiced by the Blackfoot and Crow Indians. He was an admirer of many of the Indian tribes, especially those in the east and Middle West. They are present in his paintings and sculptures. He was overcome by the beauty of their bodies, their proud carriage, their dramatic shows of bravery, and their horsemanship.

Their dances were an integral part of their lives. The Buffalo dancers,

The Sun Dance of the Blackfoot was a test of bravery of the young warriors . . .

usually ten or twelve, wore buffalo masks or heads with the tails attached. Each brave had one of these headdresses among his possessions. Music for the dancing was the steady beat of the tom-tom, rattles, and yelling. The dancing was continued day and night, and as soon as one dancer became exhausted another took his place.

In some villages these dances were kept up for two or three weeks without interruption, waiting for the hunters to return with a buffalo. If they were fortunate, the success of the hunt was attributed to the dance. The god was finally appeased.

The Sun Dance of the Blackfoot was a test of bravery of the young warriors who hoped to be accepted by the great hunters of the tribe. The sun was their god, and no ordeal was too severe or painful if it found acceptance in its eyes. The rite was always held during the hottest part of the summer, usually July and August, for a period of three or four days. It was preceded by fasting for a similar period, and before the dance was begun a large area was cleared, in the center of which a twenty-foot pole was erected.

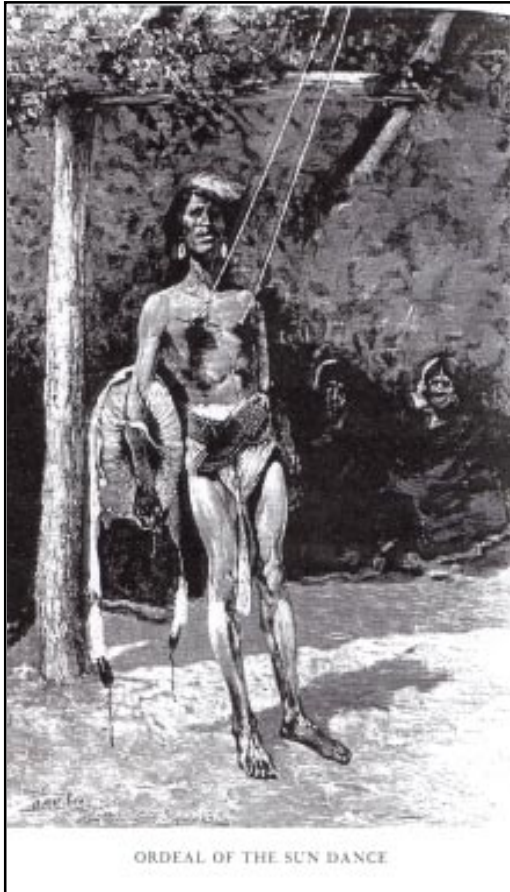
Prior to the ordeal, the young brave went to the witch doctor who made two slits, one on either side of the chest muscle. The cut had to be

long enough that a stick could be inserted under the muscle and the flesh, leaving the ends free. To these ends a rawhide rope was attached with its anchor being high on the pole. The dancer then threw himself back so that he was suspended in the air, and started dancing. He was given neither food nor water; nor could he show any pain or fear. He had to face the sun at all times with his face lifted in an attitude of supplication. This went on until the stick was pulled through the tendons and the flesh, and then he fell and was picked up by his family who had prepared a feast in his honor. Those who failed were called "squaw men."

Some, in order to show even more bravery, had similar slits made in their backs and attached by hair ropes, saddles, shields, buffalo or ox heads. Every movement they made also jerked on the ropes attached to their backs. These too must be torn through the flesh. Those who had successfully completed the sun dance showed with pride throughout their lives the scars from their ordeals.

Through his acquaintance and study of the different tribes, Remington found every one of them had some variation of the buffalo and sun dances, and all had dances unique to their tribes.

Those who had successfully completed the sun dance showed the scars from their ordeals.



from Frederick Remington's Own West

The story of Winnemucca's Wife is from Pioneer Nevada, Volume I, published by Harold's Club and Wilson Advertising.



Constance Walters is a third-generation Nevadan. Educated at the University of Nevada, Reno, her life experiences include teaching, real estate, and motherhood. She is also an historian and writer.





PHOTO BY THE U.S. ARMY



Dancing

Dancing Makes the World Go Round

Esther Early

From my earliest memories I have loved dancing. Unfortunately, I never was a really good dancer, so my great pleasure is in watching others perform. I love to watch every kind of dancing, and it lifts my heart and brings joy to my soul. Everything from western hoedowns to ballet fascinates me.

In the small mining town where I was born, the dance hall was the center of most social functions. School plays were held there, box socials, and especially the Saturday night dances. Everyone who could walk, drive, or come by horseback attended these dances and they were eagerly looked forward to, from the elders to the youngest children. Babies were placed on piles of coats, as well as the younger children who, tired out from the excitement and vigorous exercise, went to sleep, to be carried home and put in their own beds at the end of the evening.

Bright gas and kerosene lamps were suspended from the ceiling to light the festivities. The band usually consisted of a fiddle, piano and if we were lucky, an accordion, banjo, gui-

tar, or even a Jew's-harp. They would stop to rest occasionally, and if they were men they would probably step out in the back where they could partake of a little liquid refreshment, surreptitiously, of course, because of prohibition. The cowboys and miners also made trips outside, to the disgust of the women, and sometimes fights would break out, usually over some fair lady who would be secretly flattered by the attention. If they became too obstreperous, however, the sober elements of the town would encourage them to leave, and, if necessary, a really objectionable imbibor would be remanded to the tiny, single-room, brick jail for the remainder of the night.

In the meantime, when the band struck up the music, everyone moved to the dance floor. Chairs lined the walls, where ladies and young girls sat and waited to be invited to dance. Each one sat in anticipation and dread that she might be a wallflower, which would mean she was too ugly or disliked for some reason. Wives and husbands often danced together from time to time and so would boyfriends



They especially loved the Charleston, and I envied their expertise.

and girlfriends, but then they were free to dance with others, as they liked. Men would frequently ask little girls to dance much to their delight, and this would begin their training in the art of dance. Even tiny girls could stand on the toes of the men and be danced around the floor. It was perfectly all right for girls to dance with girls, but not boys with boys. After the final song, "Good Night Ladies," was played, everyone would reluctantly gather their children and spouses or sweethearts and go home, tired but happy.

Some of the favorite dances were the Virginia Reel, the Two Step, the Waltz, and even the Charleston. These old standbys were accompanied by much laughter and good-natured teasing.

Those were wonderful times and I cherish their memory. They were important in keeping up the spirits of a community beset by mining tragedies and the devastation of the Great Depression.

I loved to watch my sister and her girlfriends practice their dances at home. They would put records on the old wind-up Victrola and then dance together. They especially loved the Charleston, and I envied their expertise. I was much too young to be included in their circle, of course, but they permitted me at least to watch.

Later, when we had moved from the ranch on Knoll Mountain and I

began to attend high school in Wells and Elko, Nevada, the school dances became one of the main focuses of our recreation. The Junior and Senior Proms were important events, as we all spent many hours decorating the gymnasiums with crepe paper, balloons, and whatever our fertile imaginations could concoct. Whether or not a girl got invited to the prom was of crucial importance because no one wanted to be left at home on those important nights.

Great care was taken in selecting just the most beautiful prom dress in the whole world. The smell of gardenias always takes me back to those exciting nights when the boy would arrive at the girl's house with a corsage, driving his parent's car. They would have a dance card, and upon arrival they would exchange dances with other friends, but they would at least have the first dance and last dance together. The bands would have violins, a piano, a clarinet, a saxophone, and there would also be male and female singers. We would be absolutely lost in the excitement and romance of being in what seemed to be another dimension from the everyday world.

In college, the boys had for the most part been inducted into the Armed Forces, but fortunately, at the University of Nevada, there was a plethora of young Army and Air Force engineers who lived on campus get-

We would “drop” our phone numbers and names by young men we thought looked appealing.

ting crash courses. They were strictly controlled and were not even to speak to the girls on campus and were marched from the dormitories to their classes or to the library. It was in the latter that we made contact by “dropping” our phone numbers and names by young men we thought looked appealing. They would stand in line at the phone booths by the dormitories where they were lodged until they could get through to our dormitories or sorority houses. Usually our dates were for dances in the gymnasium. There were sock hops, regular dances, and when the boys graduated, before being sent elsewhere, they would have beautiful proms at local dining and dancing places. These boys were excellent dancers and enjoyed the dancing very much. In those days we never knew who would return from the war and they made the most of whatever fun they could find, and we entered into the spirit.

There were U.S.O. dances we all were encouraged to attend and were properly chaperoned. The big bands were wonderful, and I don't think the music of that era has ever been equaled. We Jitterbugged wildly, danced slow dances cheek-to-cheek, and ended the evenings tired, but wanting more.

When the war was over I married a man who was a good dancer, and we had many great times together. We went to Venezuela, where we lived for

eight years. When we attended special functions, we women dressed in cocktail dresses and sometimes formal dresses. The men wore dark suits or tuxedos. Most of the music was Latino, and we did the Rumba, Samba, Conga, Cha Cha, the Meringue, Paso Doble, and some of the native dances of Venezuela. We also danced to the popular music from the United States and even Europe. I enjoyed watching the Venezuelan people dance, as they held each other in a special way that was dignified, but with an underlying passion and grace.

My husband traveled most of the time, and I spent many evenings alone with my babies. I would play the radio or phonograph and sing to them as I rocked them, and I danced many hours away with them, even when they were too tiny to walk. It was one of my great pleasures. Today all three love to dance, and I like to think it may have started in their mother's arms.

Another interesting thing was that we learned the dances of the islands such as Trinidad, usually to the music of the steel bands. One could not hold still when those bands started playing. We did not always dance in pairs and found it was really delightful to be able to dance alone, freestyle, in couples or in groups. We could improvise or mimic the traditional dancers. Many nights we

It is one of the most important elements of the world's cultures.

danced on the beach around bonfires, drinking rum punches. Such fun we had!

When we moved back to the United States, we seldom went dancing because of my husband's work demands and the demands of our children. Never again would we know the joy and freedom of the dancing in Venezuela. However, I taught my Brownies and Girl Scouts the traditional dances, such as Strut Miss Lizzy, the Virginia Reel and others. When my children entered high school real dancing began, and I got to watch them doing all the latest dances imported from other cities and from American Bandstand. Chubby Checker delighted them with the Mashed Potato, the Twist and the Watusi. We got to watch one fad after another. There was the Funky Chicken, the Dog, the Swim, the Jerk, the Pony, the Froog, the Skate and the Monkey, just to name a few. Like the West Indian dancers, the boys and girls danced freestyle in couples or in groups. It was less important for the male to lead, though dancing cheek-to-cheek was still delicious. My eldest daughter would rather dance than eat

from the time she was small, and she even opened up our garage where she invited friends to come and take dance lessons. Naturally I got to hear all the latest music. I even got to take my daughters to concerts where they and all the other girls screamed and danced to their heart's content. Of course the Beatles were one of the most important influences in their social life.

As the years went by, my husband lost interest in dancing, but I still love to watch it on TV, movies, theatre or in floorshows.

It is one of the most important elements of the world's cultures, expressions of grace and pleasure.

It has ever been our inheritance of creativity.



Esther Early is a native Nevadan. She has two daughters and one son, of whom she is very proud. In her "golden years" she finds

many interests and opportunities to grow and to be of service.





Dancing

Our Dancing Days

Catherine Allen

While we were growing up we lived out in the country, too far to drive into town for dancing classes. The classes were held in the afternoons, and most everyone was busy working on the farm.

But most Saturday nights our parents and their friends would get together at different homes for singing and dancing. The ladies would bake and bring covered dishes. The men would bring their banjos, harmonicas, guitars and whatever musical instruments they knew. We, the children, would try to dance also. Some were very good. I wasn't. I still can't tell a good tune from a bad one, or carry a tune. When we kids got tired, we would just go to sleep on a bed under a down comforter. After the dancing and eating were over, our parents would wake us up and get us dressed

to go home. Needless to say, our parents didn't get much sleep. But all of the men would be on the job Sunday morning to milk the cows, and we would go to church too.



Catherine (Stalker) Allen was born in Sharon, Connecticut. She was head nurse in the urology unit at Vassar Brothers Hospital in

Poughkeepsie, New York. She was married in 1952 to Herbert B. Allen and became a mother of one son, Lance, soon after. Catherine moved to Reno to be with her son's family after Herbert passed away. She has also worked as a community volunteer.







Dancing

Dance—As Viewed by a Non-Dancer

Grace Bartel

As a girl growing up the daughter of a conservative Mennonite minister, for me dancing was a forbidden activity. Music was acceptable, but dancing was considered “worldly.” I longed to dance.

When I was in high school I had an opportunity to travel to a nearby city and attend a ballet concert. My father would not allow me to go. “The next thing you will be wanting to go to a burlesque show.” The rationale of this escaped me. They were two entirely different experiences!

We had junior and senior banquets at the church high school I attended—fancy decorations and our best clothes, but no dancing—only music.

As my life expanded, my children were born into a world with fewer cultural restrictions. My daughter took ballet lessons, and my son danced at school activities. I still longed to dance.

When my daughter was attending a local college, we found a ballet studio where we could take dance/exercise classes. I learned the terminology and discovered first hand

how very difficult is this type of dance, especially with a forty-year-old body. I loved each experience.

At our first Christmas in our new home in Yosemite, our now-adult children and their spouses came home to share the celebration. They brought the music and knowledge of folk dancing. What a thrill it was to have my children dancing in our own home.

At the time our eldest son was married our daughter was the mother of our first grandchild—four-year-old Andrew. Our son Ty was married to a beautiful New Orleans girl in a formal Catholic wedding. At the reception there was a wonderful jazz dance band, and what a dance! My husband, who is a good dancer, danced with our little grandson, who “danced,” standing on his feet. I danced with my husband, moving my feet and body to the rhythm with a simple step. Life was good.

Our first granddaughter, Gracie, started ballet lessons when she was seven years old. She is now twelve years old and a wondrous dancer. Each time I am able to visit her I attend her dance classes. To see her disciplined body moving freely moves me to

To see her disciplined body moving freely moves me
to tears.

tears. I no longer long to dance—my family has provided me with the joys of movement.



Grace Bartel was born May 7, 1935. She is wife of Earl, stepmother of Ty and Jonni Sue Bartel, mother of Brent Weaver and

Becki Davis, and is enjoying life loving her eight grandchildren. Her first career was in nursing, including administration and education. Her second career was spent in San Francisco selling real estate and singing in the San Francisco Symphony Chorus.





Dancing

No Dancing in Our Family

Earl Bartel

My main excuse for a lack of experience in the field of dance is that I was born into a family whose religion did not acknowledge the acceptance of dancing or other prurient activities. My grandparents were of German background. Mother's branch of the family sprang from a Lutheran origin, migrating to the United States via Russia. Father's parents were Mennonites and migrated from Germany through Poland. Mother became a Mennonite by marriage, and thus we were a family firmly ensconced in the edict of "no dancing in our family." Besides all of this, my hometown of Lehigh was very small and was dominated by no less than four churches, most opposed to dancing. Since there were no opportunities to sin in this particular fashion, we young men were left with only idle dreams of athletic prowess and lewd thoughts to occupy our time.

This situation continued until I graduated from high school and began attendance at Bethel College. Bethel was and is a Mennonite supported college. It adheres to the basic tenets of the Mennonite doctrines,

including pacifism and a definite look askance at dancing, other than square dancing. Thus, my further education regarding dancing was entrusted to numerous friends from other cities and states. My attendance at Bethel was made possible by a scholarship in basketball. Although my physical condition and ability were factors in this scholarship, I soon succumbed to the promise of new pleasures, introduced by friends, who were known around the campus as "city guys." These fellows really knew all about the forbidden pleasures that had eluded my participation during the seventeen years prior to college life. Smoking cigarettes and drinking beer occurred in the first month of my college life. Could dancing be far behind?

Marlys, a "city girl" friend, introduced me to dancing. She was willing to send some time helping me learn the basic steps required to shuffle about on the tiny dance floors common in dimly lighted joints with loud jukeboxes. The basic steps required very little concentration as they involved only three things to remember. Starting with either foot, it was "step-

It was “step-step-slide” and continued until you were exhausted or the music stopped.

step-slide” and continued until you were exhausted or the music stopped. As all of the girls seemed quite adept at following this routine, it never occurred to me to try to learn other dance steps. After numerous evenings of practice, I now felt that having mastered ballroom dancing, it was time to learn more about becoming adept in the school of romance. Marlys was more interested in dancing than in romance, so it was time for me to find another mentor.

For special occasions the city guys and gals on campus arranged dances at the local country club. The known “loose” students on the campus were invited to these dances. If you could dance, you were welcome at the dance. It was further required that you bring a date and two dollars for admission. It was amazing how many of the beautiful young ladies from the campus were able to dance. The one-two-slide steps did not meet with disfavor by most of the maidens, and all of them were familiar with the rudiments of romance. (One step at a time until you reach your goal. That’s easier than dancing.)

The ballroom at the country club was large with polished hardwood floors and overlooked the nineteenth hole, which was lighted at night. An outdoor balcony on one side of the dance floor was great for a quick smoke and exchange of pleasantries with one’s date. These dances were so

much fun and did not seem sinful. Since the two-dollar admission did not provide adequate funds for a live band, the gigantic Wurlitzer provided the music for dancing. Glenn Miller tunes were favored by most dancers, and thus the full gamut of existing Miller music was played. When the first notes of “String of Pearls” sounded, “Shotzie” Graber and I always gravitated to each other as this had become our favorite tune. This was our song and we were carried to a mountain of bliss as we danced to this music. Strangely, we never did date, even though we liked to dance together. This may have been because she was engaged to another basketball player and “one does not poach within the same chicken coop.”

My new mentor, Willene, was from Texas. She had been sent to Bethel to separate her from devious friends in her hometown of San Antonio. She was an excellent dancer and found my “one-two-slide” a bit boring and spent much of her time dancing with the city guys who were usually very good dancers. She was also experienced in romance. After the dance, we would engage in romantic conversation over milkshakes and hotdogs at the local drive-in. Additional information was gained on the drive to her dorm and while we parked in front of her dorm. Eventually, one of her roommates would open a window,

One of her roommates would open a window so she could enter her room without passing through the front door.

which would permit her to enter her room without passing through the front door, guarded by the dorm housemother. After two and a half years of this educational era, I enlisted in the Army Air Force to do my part for my country in the Big One, World War II. (At least it seemed like the Big One at the time.)

Partially due to a lack of ability in dancing and with increased interest in romance, my experiences with dance languished during my time in the military. Many years later my son was married to a girl of the Old South in New Orleans. The wedding was grand, and the following celebration was wonderful. A live band played many oldies and eventually began a series of Glenn Miller favorites. Suddenly, the first notes of my all-time favorite, "String of Pearls" drifted to my ears. Many slow, mystical, magi-

cal moments dancing with my wife provided an evening to be remembered forever. The old "one-two-slide" step came through in that moment of need and served me well. So here is a toast to dance in its most elementary form.



Earl Bartel was born in Lehigh, Kansas, on November 19, 1922. He and his wife, Grace, were married in 1970. Earl was educated

in architecture at Kansas State University, and most of his life work was in architecture and building construction.







Dancing

Dancing in Stages Instead of On

Annetta James

In 1931, prohibition was still in progress, but roadhouses were prevalent. My first memory of dancing was with the young undertaker who was taking out my Mother's niece. Then there was a program of free tap dancing lessons. I never had the tap dancing shoes, but I did have the taps (we called them blackies—they cost 25 cents, and I can still hear the sound of those taps) that I made sure were heard as I practically danced my way to town.

Oh, yes, we also had a recital—and a one, and a two, and a three four five six seven—what dreams I had—reveling in Shirley Temple—dancing, and Deanna Durkin singing. My hookey-playing partner Connie and I danced the Beer Barrel Polka with the old people (old to us anyway) when there were meetings of the Townsend Penn; a political ploy I believe. Then came high school, and Connie and I took a dancing class. She was a good head taller than I, but somehow I ended up leading. There was the Prom. One of our neighbors gave me her daughter's dress, a red and white polka dot. Mother made it over for me and when

Bill Mulholland came to pick me up, no car—just shank's mare—I was angry as a wet hen and walked ahead of him all the way home. At our fiftieth class reunion he denied taking me to the Prom, but I remember. Yes I do.

My first real boyfriend did not dance, but I had the joy of three weeks with my wonderful pilot husband who did not come home. After his death I moved to California to live with his family. Subsequently I remarried and that husband did not dance. But I danced with brooms and tea towels and dreamed dreams. After the death of a child, we divorced.

Then I had a wonderful love affair. I wrote poetry to him and put it under the windshield wiper of his car. The gentleman was separated. He never once said he loved me, but oh, the betrayal of the eyes. He broke my heart but I am grateful that he allowed me to love him. He was tall (I'm short), but we danced and I can still remember the musk of him.

Some years passed, and along came Jack. We married and had great times together. We danced, not only literally, but our souls danced in

Remember, there are still brooms and tea towels.

unison. What a sense of humor he had. How we laughed and what fun we had. I am still angry with him for leaving me, even though I believe he is in a better place. When he was in a rest home, there was a gentleman who came there and played a keyboard. I danced with probably the best dancer ever, Waltz, Jitterbug. After Jack and I moved to my brother-in-law's house—Bill Barnes. Jack had to come back to Reno for medical reasons. Bill sold his home and moved back with Jack and me to Reno. Jack, had a stroke, and was unable to dance so I asked Bill to take lessons with me at the YMCA. I even offered to pay for them (I later did). He was so hesitant because he said he could not possibly compete with my waltzing, jitterbugging friend. I convinced him to go to the lessons, and we do a wild Two-Step occasionally, but it doesn't really matter. My legs are not as young as they once were, and remember, there are still brooms and tea towels.

Annetta James was born in Millville, New Jersey, attended school there, and was graduated from high school in 1943. After graduation, she went to work at New Jersey Bell Telephone. In 1945, she moved to California after her foster mother's death and her husband's death in World War II just three months later. Having no remaining family, she lived with her husband's family and attended Woodbury Business College. She later remarried and had a son. She now lives in Reno.



Annetta in 1943.



Dancing

Dreamland

Jon Otis

Of course dancing has long been an integral part of American society. School dances, Square Dances, Polkas, and dancing lessons are most commonly thought of by the average person. One particular part of our social fabric that is often overlooked is the Taxi Dance clubs.

During and right after World War II, they became somewhat commonplace. One in particular that I became familiar with was the Dreamland Dance Hall located in Los Angeles. It was on the second floor of a three story building on the east side of Main Street. It had a huge flashing neon sign: *Dreamland Dance*. It was the premier Dime-a-Dance hall in the L.A. area, even though it was in a rough section of downtown. Main Street was teeming with strip joints, burlesque shows, and third-class bars. The street was alive with service men, hustlers, winos, hookers, con artists and side walk barkers hawking for the strip joints. But Dreamland was different in that it only allowed military men with good behavior and respectable civilians.

I know that for a fact because my

older brother, Bill, was the bouncer there. Naturally his title was the more respectable "night manager." This was in 1945 when there were numerous military folks looking for fun and good times. Bill had come back from the Pacific war zone where he had been wounded during the Marshall Islands campaign. After convalescing from his wounds, he returned to the States and was assigned to Shore Patrol duty (military police) where his primary beat was Main Street for much of 1945.

Bill had done some peace keeping favors for Dreamland and other places of business and was quite well known on the street. As a consequence, when he was discharged from the Marine Corps, Dreamland offered him a job as chief enforcer of etiquette and gentlemanly behavior.

The club opened every evening and was a standard Dime-a-Dance operation. The girls would sit in chairs surrounding the large, highly polished dance floor or sit at some of the tables near the bar. They were in their finest glittery attire. Bright red, green or blue dresses seemed to be the most

Some of the patrons who came there were lonely older men looking for companionship or maybe romance.

popular. Many were tastefully dressed while some wore too many sequins and looked a little gaudy.

Some of the patrons who came there were lonely older men looking for companionship or maybe romance. The younger fellows were looking for action. These were the guys where Bill had to focus his attention. Loud, boisterous behavior or groping the girls was not tolerated. Offenders were sent down the stairs, forcibly if necessary.

When a customer came in, he would go to the ticket booth located next to the bar. As he came up the stairs, these were the first two operations he saw. The men would usually buy ten tickets for a dollar; the regulars usually bought many more. When a patron would ask a girl to dance, she would take the ticket which would be turned in at closing time for her share of the “take.” I think the general agreement was to split fifty-fifty.

If a fellow didn’t want to dance but just sit at a table and talk, his ticket was good until the music stopped. Since the tunes were three minutes long, ten tickets were good for a half hour chat.

The lighting at Dreamland was soft and colorful, with reds and blues dominant. This muted atmosphere blended well with the music, which

was usually the big band fox trot variety.

The music of Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey and Duke Ellington was popular. Slow Fox Trots were predominant, with Waltzes, Rumbas and Swing interspersed. Many of the girls were quite respectable and were new to the area or had been in a broken relationship. They were looking for the same thing some of the men were seeking—marriage.

Since dating services were not prevalent in the, 1940s this served the purpose for many people. In fact it worked that way for my brother. He met a girl named Madelene there who had just arrived from the Philippines with her mother and “grandmother” During the war the Japanese kept them in a concentration camp because they were Americans who had some influence and wealth. The family had lost everything during their four year internment, including Madelene’s father and grandfather. Property and business records were destroyed, missing or stolen and the women never received adequate compensation.

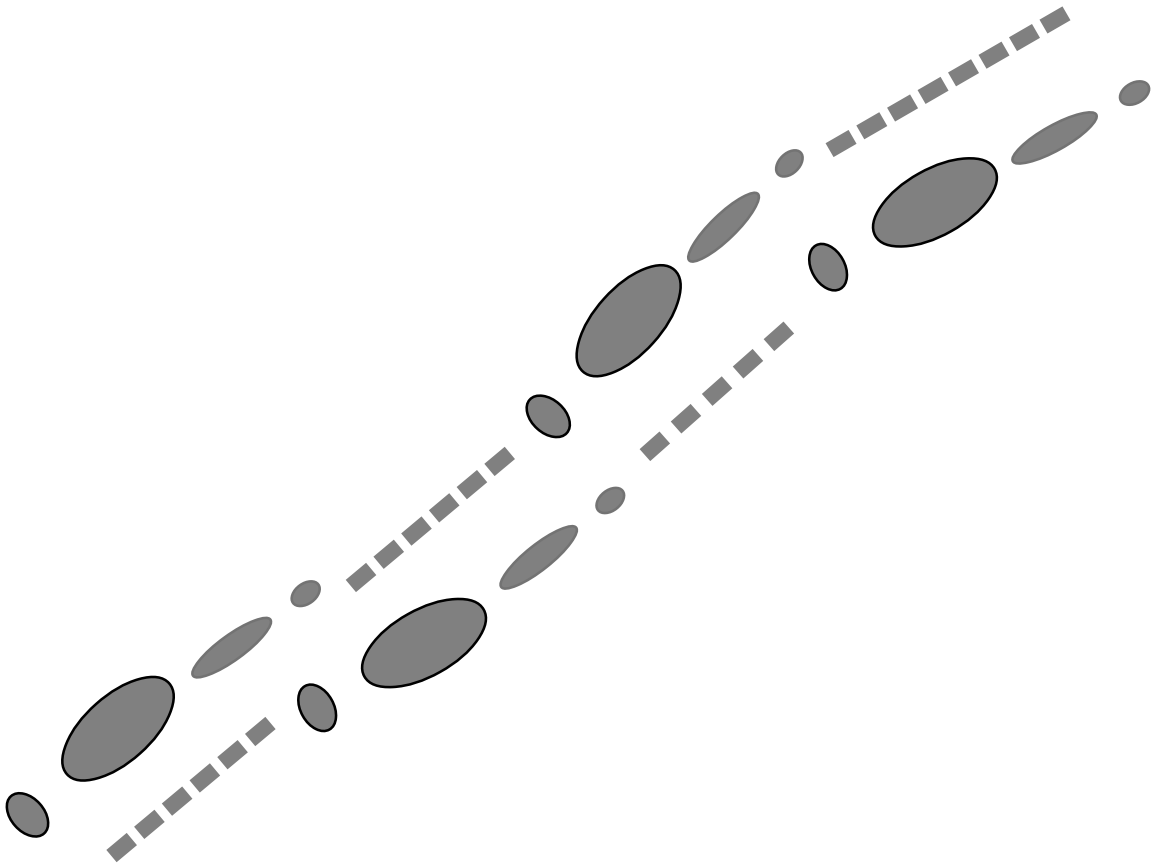
I wish I could say the marriage was blissful and long lasting but it ended after only two years. They probably wouldn’t have done any better with a dating service.

The younger fellows were looking for action.



John Otis was born in 1929 in Texarkana, Texas, and moved to Los Angeles in 1944.

He has lived in Reno since 1987 and has been happily married to Bobbie for forty-five years.







Dancing

Sockhop

Beth Larson

“Can ya’ spit through yer teeth?” I looked down into his guileless blue eyes. He really wanted to know. A wedge of corn-colored hair fell almost into one eye. Freckles were so close together they met in patches.

The adults who arranged dances for “Young Teens” at the Community Center had the boys line up on one side and the girls on the other side of the basement room (the one with the bars on the windows). Then we had to walk straight across and dance with the boy on the other side.

I glanced over at the girl next to me. I was 5’6”. She hardly came up to my shoulder. I was too tall. The boy continued, “My brother has teeth like yours, and he can spit *three feet!*”

I considered the matter carefully. Could I spit through my teeth? Come to think of it, what was it about my teeth?

He continued to pump my right arm in absentminded defiance of the beat of the music. He didn’t move his feet at all.

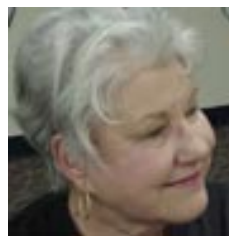
“Oh, I never tried”, I admitted reluctantly.

“Oh,” he responded. Then he moved his feet—onto mine. I wondered if I could get athlete’s foot through my socks.

That night, I locked the bathroom door. I checked my toes. Not yet. I got a glass of water, faced the tub and tried to spit. Soon the front of my PJs were soaked. And I knew. I couldn’t.

Then I looked at my teeth. There *was* a space between my front teeth. It was huge. Enormous. Overwhelming. The only thing I could see! Funny I had never noticed before.

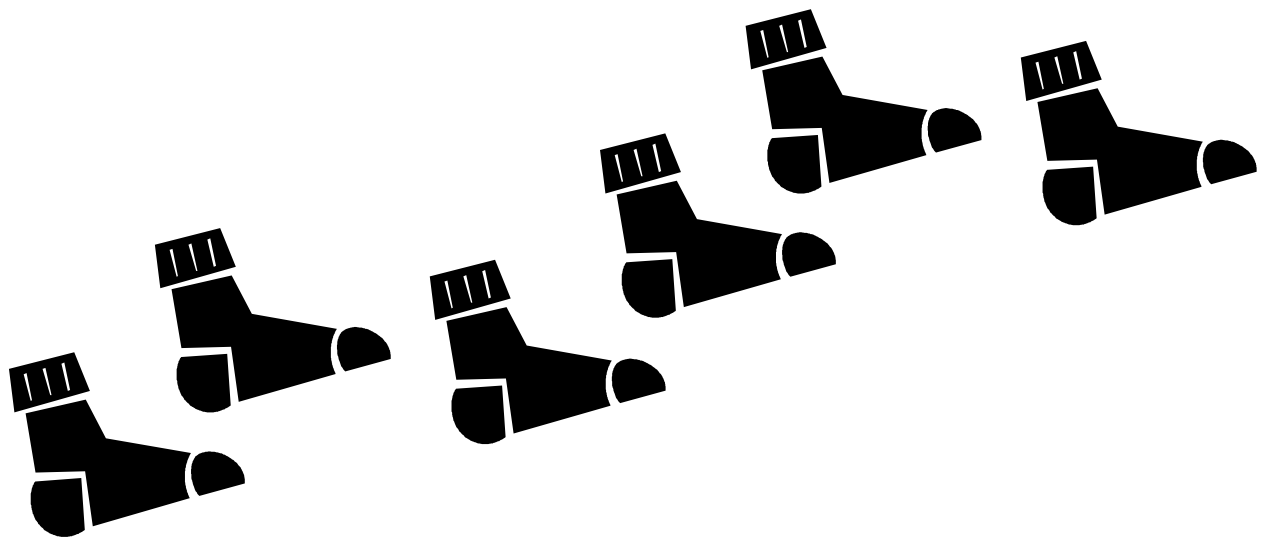
I was sure I was an absolute failure at this business of being a teenager. I was too tall, I had funny teeth, and I couldn’t even spit through them. Misery.



Beth Larson was born in Canton, Ohio and married Larry twenty-two years later. One of the reasons she was attracted to Larry was that he was a delightful dancer. This may not be the best way to pick

This may not be the best way to pick out a husband,
but it turned out well.

*out a husband, but it turned out well,
despite her inexperience in husband
choosing. They produced three
children and so far, two amazing
grandchildren. She spent
her working life as a
social worker with the
aged, the retarded, and
(closest to her heart) the
mentally ill.*





Dancing

Ice Dancing

Constance Walters

In the middle of the desert, in the midst of a war, on an undersized ice rink, people of Elko, Nevada watched the International Ice Review of 1942. Stars of the show were Ernest MacGowan and Ruth Mack, Ice Follies performers, accompanied by a chorus of six lovely skaters.

The Commercial Hotel booked shows at intervals of three or four months to help civilian morale. An ice show in such a small arena was a real challenge, and according to the skaters, the quick starts and stops added to the thrilling entertainment. MacGowan and Mack had been a team for some years. Now in their late forties, show business made heavy demands. MacGowan suffered from arthritis of the spine cause by years of the damp and cold.

Ruth Mack's memento of her rink years was the missing first joints on two fingers of her right hand. During a rehearsal, another skater had severed them when she skated over the hand. As a result they were fanatical about clear ice and costume parts being securely fastened. Hair ornaments were forbidden because a

bobby pin could tumble an entire dance line.

Advertising for the show was cause for much speculation. "In that dinky area? I don't believe it." The size had been cleared with the dancers, all twenty-five by fifteen feet of it. Several doubting locals turned out to watch the preparation. The owner of the hotel looked on appalled as they drilled a hole in his beautiful hardwood dance floor, but it was necessary to bring in the tubes and lines from the compressor located in the basement. The rink itself was no small undertaking. First came an insulating layer of paper on the dance floor, next the canvas container for the pipes, sand, and water. The refrigerating pipes went in first. They were covered with damp sand, which was allowed to freeze to the consistency of concrete. Over the sand a half inch of water was added, and Presto! There was an ice rink.

The Lounge where the show was presented would seat about eighty people. The show ran for eight nights, and every night there was a sell-out crowd. People came from Winne-

The Lounge

Presents Something New

"The International Ice Review of 1942"

Featuring

MacGowan & Mack

and Their
Sensational
Ice Follies Performers

With
a Chorus of
Six Lovely Skaters

FEATURING THE FOLLOWING ARTISTS

JACK REEVES - COMEDY ACHOBATICS - **ON ICE**

CHARLES HADLETT - BARREL JUMPER

WALTER RIDGE - THE SKATING LAUGH RIOT

LITTLE JQ-ANN

WORLD'S YOUNGEST FIGURE SKATER

MUSIC BY

JOHN EDWARD MC LAIN'S
Six Piece Lounge Orchestra

Costuming was glittery, and when the chorus of six skated and kicked in unison, it elicited whistles . . .

mucca and all the ranches in between. The fact that it was wartime didn't affect attendance. Ranchers had ample gasoline and tire allowances.

Music for the show was furnished by a six-piece local orchestra. Costuming was sufficiently glittery, and when the chorus of six skated and kicked in unison, it elicited whistles and clapping. MacGowan and Mack's sensational dance was a French Apache interpretation, which was not cooled by the fact that it was on ice. Additionally there was a barrel jumper, a young skater who was touted as "the Skating Laugh Riot," and MacGowan and Mack's eight-year-old daughter, whose ability seemed to be remarkable. All in all this desert ice review was a great success, and the local critic dubbed it "a slick show."

And what about ice dancing? It has been around as long as people have skated, but not in the rinks. Originally rinks were for men only. Then King Edward took a great interest in skating, and the rinks were opened up to women. It was an immediate success and pairs skating became popular. With just a slight turn, skaters could waltz face-to-face rather than side-by-side.

Ice dancing was figure skating with panache. The music made the difference. It furnished an artistic background for figure skaters, and

provided rhythm for ice dancers.

Early women who skated were constricted by their long skirts and corsets. Those were the first to go, and with their abandonment came a freedom to use ballet and modern dance steps. Although several came before her, the one who affected ice-dancing most through costuming and style was Sonja Henie, whose beauty and ability lead to stardom. Once Hollywood became enthralled with the spectaculars on ice, all skating became more exciting and precision dancing by lines of beautiful skaters was an important background of many motion pictures.

The Ice Capades and Ice Follies traveled the world and produced many interesting side careers. Choreography became a must. Designing of costumes just for ice dancing was an industry of its own. Many stars were created and their influence was felt in makeup and hairstyles—who can forget Dorothy Hamill's wedge cut? In modern competition, occasionally it seems the daring costumes are more important than the skating.

Ice dancing becomes more exciting each year, because the young dancers keep pushing the envelope—adding one more turn, a different lift, or a daring new combination of moves. The public has embraced it as absorbing and thrilling entertainment.

Ice dancing was figure skating with panache.



Constance Walters is a third-generation Nevadan and writes from experience and personal observation about

Nevada history and traditions, as well as history beyond the Silver State. See her history of the Sun Dance elsewhere in this collection.





Dancing

Dancing in Reno

Sally Quade

I began to appreciate the place of dance in our lives and the world some years ago, but not really until my sons, as spectators, joined my daughter's dance class.

I had driven to Sparks, taking my daughter to Sylvia's dance classes once a week for several years and usually took the boys along. There they sat, waiting, I thought, until we went next door for refreshments, and I often felt guilty about these two little boys spending all that time watching, rather than following their own interests. But then I rationalized it. My daughter went to their violin practices and sports events without complaint and with apparent pleasure and benefit.

"Privileged childhoods, you have," I told them all, not really understanding what I said.

Here were the boys and I, sitting as my mother had with me. While the dancers did their warming up exercises—their Tourjetes, Pliez and Grand Bantmas. At year-end recitals, the boys wore their suits and commented knowledgeably about the dance: any improvement they noticed,

and who flubbed up. They seemed to *see* a sour note. And *feel* continuity.

A few years later, my daughter choreographed her own dances and made her own costumes. She would rehearse in our living room. The boys critiqued it all, often making constructive comments and suggestions about costuming, music, placement, and form. They had opinions. "A little to the left." "Not so much footwork." "Keep it smooth," they'd say. They were at least temporarily engaged, and maybe a little pleased with their status as experts.

Later still, my daughter became a drama teacher. She helps her middle school students write their own plays and choreograph their own dances. All three of my children have formed and re-formed their own houses and gardens with line, design, color, and texture in mind. I believe that they have passionately attended to an inner rhythm and protocol, whether placing a door, kitchen sink or a veranda.

My mother, who sat in my dance classes long ago, came to live in Reno in her later years. She was diagnosed with Alzheimers and needed care during the day when I was working. As

We do the same dance.

her need for care increased, she stayed in a retirement home.

One day, when I came to pick her up, the director said that she had gone out. "She and Sylvia are out for a walk."

"Sylvia? But my mother doesn't know the Sylvia I know," I said to myself. "Could it be?"

Sylvia was hospitalized with Alzheimers last year, I had heard.

I found the two, a few blocks away, doing pirouettes down the sidewalk, laughing, stopping to talk, and then off again. When they saw me, they made a few more turns and stopped.

It was the Sylvia I knew.

"Your mother and I have such fun," she said. "We understand each other."

Mother spread her arms, gracefully, then bowed and said, "We do the same dance."



Sally Quade, née Armstrong, was born January 8, 1927 in Long Beach, California. She went to the

University of California, Berkley and to the Sorbonne, France and took graduate work at UNR and became a psychotherapist. Sally also received a BA in Art and double masters in Counseling Psychology and Special Education. First she worked in Special Education. Later she worked with gifted children. She also has three gifted children: One is a drama teacher; one is a building contractor; and one is a professor of Geology at the University of Arizona.





Dancing

Still Got That Swing!

Louise Lang

If Doug hadn't been playing senior softball last spring, we wouldn't have been at the dance. We hadn't heard about it.

At softball practice, Eric, another player, bragged to Doug about winning a dance contest. Eric and his wife had gone to a place near Lake Tahoe the previous week where they had won the competition. Then he said, "There's a special senior dance Saturday at the Convention Center. It's free. We're going. Why don't you come too?"

"Sure. We'll see you there," Doug said.

The hall was fairly full that night. White fabric tablecloths graced the big round tables. On the underside were little stickers that, if you found one, entitled you to receive a beautiful bouquet of roses. We found one. Our lucky night.

Three portable wooden dance floors covered the carpeting. The live band music was excellent. We were having fun.

The announcement of a contest wasn't clear enough over the loudspeakers that we could be sure what had been said, but that didn't matter. We'd have danced anyway to the song they started playing, Glenn Miller's "In the Mood." That's our favorite jitterbug tune, and no way can we stay seated when we hear that, ever!

Doug and I did our high energy routine, the one where my legs are up in the air now and then—in spite of our being seventy-three and sixty-seven. One by one, all the other couples were tapped on the shoulder, the signal for them to sit down.

The band kept playing, so we kept dancing, loving every second. It must have been fifteen minutes of that strenuous stuff before the band halted and the audience applauded. Panting just a little, grinning and perspiring a lot, we accepted our prize, a color TV.

This article previously appeared in Swing Magazine.

Panting just a little, grinning and perspiring a lot,
we accepted our prize, a color TV.



*Louise and Doug
learned to Jitterbug
(Western Swing) in
a class in 1995.
They have danced*

*together since 1986,
Square Dance and
Round Dance,
progressing to
ballroom.*





Dancing

Summer in the Carpathians

Monica Grecu

I must have been about nine months old when my Mother found me standing all by myself in my little bed, holding tight with my both hands the upper bar of its side. Since I was her first child, she was in tears seeing the progress I made on my own. “Look, look. She is standing! My little girl is standing!” Maia, my nanny, rushed in the room to see the miracle. What left them speechless was that I was standing on my toes. I kept moving along the side of my bed enjoying the new view of the world from my upright position, all that time “walking” on my toes, my mother related. Maia predicted: “She will be a dancer, look how comfortable she is standing on her toes.” My mother had her doubts. “A dancer! How could she be a dancer? I am not; as for her father, he has flat feet . . . What chances could she have?”

Well, Maia was right, to my Mother’s surprise. I danced my steps everywhere I went, once I was steady on my feet. My first performance took place three years later in the kindergarten. I was one of the faeries and performed without any hesitation on

my toes, proud of my pink crepe paper ballerina outfit, the only one my Mother could afford after the war. Throughout my primary, middle, and later, high school years, I performed on various occasions, dancing with passion. But I carried all that time, hidden in my heart, the regret of not being allowed to go for classical ballet. My mother considered that her only daughter should not be an entertainer, but have an intellectual career, and “use her legs to carry her to institutions of higher learning . . .” My Mother’s decisions were law. So I did what she chose for me, but not without hidden tears, regrets, and quiet dancing in my room at night, when the radio was on and I could see my image in the dark window. Once I entered the university, I danced for pleasure three times a week, for hours, at the Students’ Club, after classes or when returning from the library. It was wonderful! I never ran short of partners. It kept me fit, relaxed, and it never felt like an effort. It was sheer joy!

One summer, after my third academic year at BBU, Cluj, I received a ticket for three week vacation at a

A live band from Bucharest played for hours, and we danced till late that night.

students' camp in the beautiful Carpathian Mountains. It was a large national camp, where meritorious students from all Romanian universities were sent to rest after the exams from time to time. I could not believe that I was finally selected. The good grades were there from the beginning, but my file said at the rubric "origine sociala", *intellectual*. That alone would have rendered me ineligible. But the consistence of merit scholarship for three years in a row brought about the change in their decision.

Predeal is a charming mountain resort round the year, but in summer is such an enchanted place that I could hardly stand the wait till we had to be there. I took the train to Predeal from Cluj and few hours later I was climbing the slopes of the Carpathians toward the villa where the offices of our camp were located. I enjoyed the view, the fresh air, and the altitude. It was a dream come true.

Once I received my keys, the directions to, and the address of the villa I was supposed to live in, I was on my way to meet the other girls who

were to be my housemates for the following three weeks. Some of the girls were already set in their rooms. It took me a few minutes to leave my backpack in the room, to drink some water, change my shoes, and we were on our way to discover the campgrounds. We found the Sports Hall, the Canteen, the Special Events Hall, the Cinema/Theater Hall, and the Office of Activities. Our first hike took place the same afternoon. We climbed to the nearest peak and admired the sunset and surroundings from there. It was breathtaking! The clouds started to move in, swallowing the tops of the tall fir trees. The pink shades of the

sunset were turning hazy gray, and we had to leave in a hurry to reach the canteen before dark.

After dinner, to our surprise, a live band from Bucharest played for hours, and we danced till late that night. We had also the chance to meet new people and make new friends. At the end of the dance we were escorted by a few nice new friends to our villa, as it was too dark to brave finding it on our own. Nights in the mountains are



Monica and fiance at New Year's Party, 1972.

This time we were joined by the University of Timisoara soccer team, and the atmosphere became truly vivacious.

chilly and very dark, indeed.

Next morning we joined the boys for a hike in the mountains. We discovered on those trails sheepfolds, a hidden hunting villa, open spaces with wonderful wild flowers, clear springs, and heard birdcalls we never heard before. We walked practically all day, except for about half an hour when we sat and ate our sandwiches at about one o'clock. By six pm we were back in the camp, ate our dinner, and danced again for hours. This time we were joined by the University of Timisoara soccer team, and the atmosphere became truly vivacious. Those

players had energy and spirit to put us all to shame. Competitive as they were, soon a challenge was thrown to us all: "Let's have a competition, and see who can dance longer and better." We all stepped in.

The day of the competition soon came around. The band was in place, and the Special Events Hall was cleared of tables and chairs. The entire hall was our dancing floor. Seven pm was the chosen starting

time. The Timisoara soccer team was there, neatly dressed; so were the medical students from MFI, Cluj, colleagues from BBU, Cluj, and others from other universities across Roma-

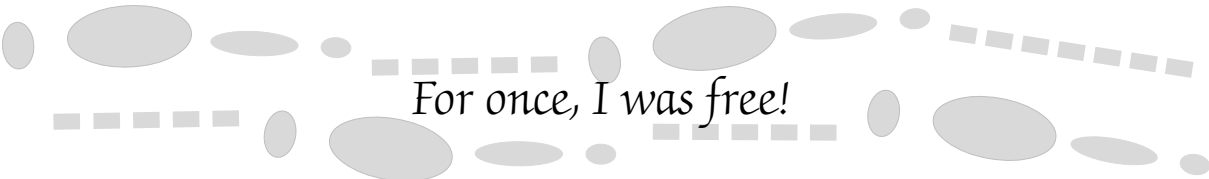
nia. The band was wonderful. They played almost without interruption, from seven in the evening till seven in the morning, challenging us with all kinds of rhythms, from European to South American. I did not miss one dance. I saw the soccer players "taking their seats on the bench," one by one—exhausted. In the end I danced with all the boys that were still standing, and at seven o'clock in the

morning I left the hall dancing my way out on my seven-centimeter high-heeled shoes. I was not tired, I was happy!

The word spread very quickly through the camp about the "BBU student in English," who left the entire Timisoara soccer team in the dust" . . . I thought that was an exaggeration. I was not competing with them, I just had fun! I was told later that the soccer players had



Monica and brother, Dan, celebrating the New Year, 1972.



For once, I was free!

challenged the camp to show off, and were disappointed to be out danced by a girl from Cluj . . . Next afternoon I received a few funny notes from some of the soccer players, who wanted to date me. We, the girls in my villa, had a good laugh about it.

I passionately loved dancing, of course. Still, I do not know where that energy came from that night. I was so happy, so light on my feet, so flexible and enthusiastic that, that night in Predeal remains one of my fondest memories. It was not the winning, or the title of the “most graceful, energetic and enthusiastic dancer on the camp” that warmed my heart, but the feeling of happiness I experienced while dancing. For once, I was free!



Monica Grecu was born in Romania and graduated from Babes-Bolyai University with a doctorate in

Comparative Literature. She teaches in the English department at the University of Nevada, Reno, where she is active in promoting interational experiences for students. She is co-director of the Lifescapes program.





Dancing

Maxwell Street Dance

Barbara Barr Drake

It was a memorable evening of dancing in the ghetto, “far” from home, that I remember well. Maxwell Street was in the heart of a tough and poor section of Chicago. I was fifteen, attending a weekend service project at a Settlement House. While less than twenty miles from home, it was another world. I loved it.

We were naive and unworldly kids from the suburbs participating in a joint work project with local youth through the American Friends Field Service Committee. We slept and ate in the Settlement House and divided into teams for service projects, painting and scrubbing alongside youth who had lived all their lives in the rough and tumble world of this neighborhood. We had no idea what their life was like, and while I had grown up in a Chicago neighborhood and had broader experiences than my lifetime suburban friends, I was undoubtedly well marked as a clueless middle class white suburban kid.

On Saturday night we had a dance. The year was 1953. The more vivid and active Civil Rights Movement had yet to make the headlines,

and we were likely unaware of all the work that had gone on for many years before the movement became a household word. (These integrated service projects had been going on for years.) It was my first genuine experience of an awakening conscience about racial issues. Before we had the dance, we had worked together Friday night and all day on Saturday, and as normal fifteen-year-old kids, we made friends quickly and had fun joking and kidding together. When it came time to dance, it felt so natural and wonderful to just be kids. By then we had unburdened ourselves of fears and inherited and absorbed social taboos.

We called him “Soup” because his last name was Campbell. He was a nice looking and good-humored African-American young man. Of course, in 1953, the term was likely “Negro.” I don’t remember much about “Soup” other than that he was a great dance partner, and I was attracted to him. I had the same kind of feelings for him as I would any handsome fifteen-year-old boy at a dance. While not a wall-flower, I was very inexperienced in dealing with boys and was just coming

I felt swept off my feet, literally, and we laughed and joked and danced.

of age in the teenage world of dates and crushes and all that goes with it. The music was lively and romantic, the dancing so alive and fun. I felt swept off my feet, literally, and we laughed and joked and danced. Then we all said good night and the local kids went home and we went to our bunks in the Settlement House.

The next day we boarded a bus for home. We all hugged and said good-bye with tears and promises to stay in touch. Of course, we didn't—our lives drifted to other things.

For us, it was a weekend experience and we soon forgot the names of our "new friends." We went to college, married, and had children, careers

and success. But I've often remembered the dance that night and what it meant to be a kid unshackled by societal mores and customs.

Have we changed in 49 years?



Barbara was born in Chicago in 1938. A graduate of Ohio Wesleyan University, she received her Masters in Social Work from

Wayne State University in 1979. She recently retired after a long career with United Way.





Dancing

The Fuzzy Duck and Other Recollections

Georgia Westbrook

When I was a tot, probably four or five years old, I started dancing lessons. There was to be a recital, and I was excited about my costume. It was a fuzzy yellow duck with a bill cap. I loved that costume. Although I don't remember the circumstances, I backed out of the performance. The costume had to be returned. I cried bitter tears at the injustice.

At a later time I was to perform with a line of ballet dancers. I found a quiet corner in which to read, became engrossed in my book, and missed my cue and once again didn't perform. I was finished as a dancer.

Mother used to take us to the Academy of Music in Philadelphia. It was wonderful. My favorite was the classic "Swan Lake." Maria Tallchief performed, and one time her partner missed a catch and she almost slid off the stage.

In high school we became self-taught and innovative Jitterbugs. We ate our lunches quickly and danced in the gym to popular records. Friday nights we danced at the "rec" center and sometimes at Hustle Inn.

A rite of passage for teens was to

take the train to Philadelphia and see the big bands at the Earle Theater. Glenn Miller was my favorite.

I also stayed up late to listen to his radio show from 10-10:15 pm. He joined the service, and one Christmas I learned of his disappearance over the English Channel. I was devastated. He was the only war casualty I "knew."

My husband learned to dance in a white glove class, but his studies and my babies precluded much dancing at Penn State. His brother Tom was also on campus, and he invited us to the Beta House for one memorable dance when I was the nursing mother of a week old baby. Much later Bruce and I danced to country western music.

After our divorce I met a man at one of the country and western places where singles hung out. He was the best dancer I'd ever danced with—a strong leader, easy to follow, and with great rhythm.

He told me he'd learned from three older sisters who forced him to dance with them after school for practice. I really enjoyed dancing and looked forward to seeing him. I asked him if he was divorced and his re-

He was married. I was heartbroken.

sponse was “Isn’t everybody?” He told me he was in construction, which often took him out of town. He was married. I was heart broken.



Seven high school dancers, fifty years later: Dolly, Charlotte, Peg, Jean, Georgia, Molly, and Pearl.



Georgia Westbrook, fifty years and seven high school dances later. Some of her memories are bittersweet; most are good; some are great. Hers has

been a lifetime of good fortune that she would not trade.

She believes we make our happiness in the appreciation of small things and that contentment follows.





Dancing

Dust Between Our Toes

Margaret Oakley

The fine white dust made little puffs that rose up between our toes as my sisters and I danced to the rhythm of my Papa's guitar. Dancing and music were such an integral part of my family life that I cannot remember a time without dancing.

My mother danced with the newest baby on her shoulder, little arms clinging to her neck—the kitchen cabinets, doors and faces all a blur. When the days grew crisp and cold we danced the Shuffle, Tap, and Jig on the worn linoleum kitchen floor.

As we grew older we accompanied our parents to the community socials of dancing and music. Children danced with each other, with older siblings, and in the arms of parents. Later we danced the Two-Step with shy awkward boys in their overalls. The forties brought the manic Jitterbug to the sounds of "The Jersey Bounce" and "String of Pearls."

Still later we danced to "Dance With Me Henry." Jitterbugging was somehow viewed as immoral by the older generation. The parish priest escorted Jitterbugs off the floor. This disapproval only made the beat more

enticing and the dancing became wilder.

Slow dancing to Frank Sinatra songs gave us a chance to hold a loved one in an embrace. Sweet words and secrets were whispered, with the chaperones none the wiser. The magic of those moonlit summer nights of dancing is only a dreamlike, but still cherished memory.

Margaret Smith Oakley was born and raised on a Missouri farm. She attended the University of Missouri and received the Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Nevada, Reno, in 1971. She lives in Reno with her husband of forty years.



Margaret Smith and her brother, circa 1942.





Dancing

Things Were Different in Those Days

Lucille Sumrall

Things were different in those days. It was only ten years after World War I. I was four years old. It was the days of prohibition, radios, victrolas; ladies bobbed their hair, shortened their skirts, and did the Charleston. Everyone danced. One of Mom's dance dresses was black satin with a beaded skirt. It was the most beautiful dress in the whole world.

One of my first memories is of dancing in my Dad's arms. Then I graduated to dancing on his feet. I have a clear memory of the outdoor pavilion in that little ranching town in Oregon. It was in the park and was white with a railing and white benches on all sides. After a time dancing I would lie down on the bench beside my grandmother and go to sleep. My brother, being four years older, would stay up and run around the park with the other boys his age. That's where Mom and Dad entered into marathon dances and dance contests.

A little later on I took tap dancing lessons. The only tap dance in my memory was done in a Dutch girl costume for a recital. We danced to

the tune of "Sidewalks on New York." Seems that most young ladies of my age have danced to that tune when they were young.

As a young girl my brother took me to the Saturday night dances at the Wagon Wheel. I went with him and went home with him. Mom and Dad did most of their dancing at the American Legion Hall. They were still winning blue ribbons even at the Oregon State Dance Contest. Then we moved from Oregon to Salt Lake City, Utah where I went to high school. Things were a little different there. No one did the Oregon Stomp. Dancing there was a little more subdued. Both feet were on the floor at all times and the girls never left contact with the boy she was dancing with. Had anyone let out a cowboy holler while dancing, they would have been asked to leave.

At the age of seventeen my church asked me to join a group of young people that did exhibition dancing. We danced all over in that part of the state. We performed most every weekend at Salt Air, which was an outdoor dance floor that extended out over Salt Lake. In its day it was *the* place to dance. All

I can still feel the breeze blowing through my hair and my long gown making soft swishing sounds as we glided across the floor.

of the big name bands played there. We would perform when the band took their break. I can still feel the breeze blowing through my hair and my long gown making soft swishing sounds as we glided across the floor.

Wouldn't you know it! The man I married doesn't even like music and is incapable of keeping time to it. He learned to dance, but believe me, he is no Fred Astaire. That was O.K. though, because dancing with him, I was so busy figuring out what his feet were going to do that I didn't have time to listen to the music. However, he did learn to dance and he did it for me. So who cares what beat he marches to?



Lucille Sumrall was born January 2, 1925, at 12:30 am, almost winning the bag of groceries for being the first baby of the new year in

Mt. Home, Idaho. She is still enjoying every minute of her life and regrets only that so many years are wasted on the young.





Dancing

The Extremely Brief Life of a Promising Ballerina

Marilynn Short

In the wonderful small town of El Reno, Oklahoma, there was a dance studio upstairs over a jewelry store on a corner of Main Street. A young lady, Virginia Dove, had tried her hand at dance, and somehow or another, ended up in our town as a dance teacher.

The town mothers all thought at one time or another, that *their* daughter—so beautiful and talented— could be the next Virginia Dove, if not a Dame Margot Fontayne. Debbie Reynolds had not yet arrived to put a different perspective to the entire matter.

I really do not remember the age at which I started taking tap, to be followed later by trying to stand on my toes and dance and hold my arms correctly . . . but according to pictures, I was young!

Each year Virginia Dove had a

dance recital, held at the high school auditorium, so all the parents and grandparents could attend. The first recital I remember was when three of us young beauties did “The Powder Puff Dance.” I cannot remember the name of the two other girls, so I guess their careers must have been as short lived as mine!



The stage is set. The curtain opens: three boxes (one yellow, one pink, one blue) are center stage. The music starts; Virginia Dove, behind curtain left, calls in a stage whisper to the three girls to “Pop Up!” like powder puffs from the powder box, do the long rehearsed dance, take the bow, return to

the box, hop in and close the lid. Lovely dance followed by much applause!

I loved my box. The big night came. I thought I heard music; I thought I heard Virginia . . . or tap noise, or something . . . so I “Popped

I thought I heard music; I thought I heard Virginia
... or tap noise, or something ... so I "Popped Up."

Up", wondered why the other two were dancing, started at the beginning of the dance, and heard uproarious laughter (and I am sure I must have heard my parents' agony expressed in some way). The other two finished their dance and returned to the boxes. I finished my dance and returned to my box ... applause mixed with the laughter!

Do not think that disaster stopped my attempts! I went on the next two or three years, graduated to toe shoes, (not everyone can do that, you know) and was in a chorus line of "Little Old Lady, Passing By, Catching Everyone's Eye," such a fancy costume with a fancy parasol. All rehearsals went fine and the big recital night arrived. About the third line into the dance a real big charley horse attacked my right calf, and down I went, just as Joe Montana and others were to do in the course of their careers. Big difference: That was The End of my career, the end of my dancing lessons, until we reached junior high school and Virginia had dance classes for the boys and girls, the same dumb boys we saw every day, and as it turned out, the same dumb boys we would dance with for the next few years of our lives, through school dances and proms. Never again however, with the notoriety I had achieved by popping up late, and having to be carried from the stage in pain.



Marilynn (Keller) Short was born in El Reno, Oklahoma, and ended up in Reno, Nevada.

The life in between never got more exciting than this story!





Dancing

Laughter

Sheri Landers-Thorman

Some sense of humor is necessary to survive, and mine has always been well developed. There are those that will tell you it is a little far out, and I must agree that I often find humor where others do not. I have also been described as easily amused. I do smile a lot, chuckle at the funny papers and cartoons, but seldom laugh out loud. When I do it is usually at staged visual situations. I find clowns to be particularly amusing—for example, instances at Cirque de Soleil, early Red Skelton, and a long-time-ago skit at Ken Murray's Black-outs.

The most memorable laugh fest ever occurred in the unlikely place of Death Valley Junction in the Amargosa Opera House. The story of the opera house and how it came to be is fascinating in itself but has little to do with the hilarious experience I had there. However, a bit of stage setting is necessary.

Martha Beckett is a ballerina who established her own theatre in 1968. Her passion was to dance, and she did and does every night. When live audiences were small she painted an

audience of 16th century Spanish royalty on the walls of her theatre. By the time I had heard of this lady her reputation and audiences had grown so that it was necessary to have reservations to attend her performances. My husband and I were visiting Death Valley with some friends, and I prevailed upon the rest of the group to go to the Opera House to see a performance. When I made reservations I was told to arrive early and pick up tickets at the box office. As I did so our names were neatly crossed off a list with a pencil that had obviously been sharpened with a pocketknife, and I was handed four well-used tickets of the raffle type.

Soon the Box Office closed and the gentleman who had been there appeared dressed as a circus barker on a platform. After a short spiel, he had us line up, "Everyone with their own ticket please." Each of us handed him a ticket as we proceeded by. As at many gatherings, others chose to sit toward the rear, and when we entered the only seats available were those in the front row. They were excellent, on the center aisle at stage left. I don't recall the

My ribs were literally aching as the dance went on.

whole of Ms. Beckett's program. It was a series of vignettes. In one of them, the circus barker appeared, now dressed in long underwear that tried valiantly to be a somewhat-worse-for-the-wear danseur's costume. I later learned his name: Thomas J. Willett.

He said not a word, but his attempts to be a partner to the elegant Ms. Beckett tapped my humor center, and the laughter began bubbling up and erupted in full force. I could feel the waves of bubbles growing as they traveled from deep inside. They started as tiny, closely clustered, champagne bubbles and grew as they rose to a full boil, bubbled hugely when they reached my throat and rolled out of my mouth.

As his distress at his ineptitude grew, so grew my sounds of mirth. The more I laughed the louder the sounds of laughter around us. As I gasped for breath and paused to wipe my eyes before I laughed some more, I felt sure if there had been a place to move to away from me my compatriots would have been long gone. My ribs were literally aching as the dance went on.

He was the consummate clown, and as I continued to break up he played to me without hesitation. When the sketch ended, even though I was still laughing loudly, I was the first on my feet giggling and clapping as the audience joined me.

I was finally able to compose myself enough to calm down for the final act. Later, in the room where Ms. Beckett was graciously signing programs, I saw Mr. Willett standing to one side. He was every inch the Edwardian gentleman, garbed in an elegant set of tails. As I walked up to him and extended my hand, he said, "I have seldom had such an appreciative audience." He took my hand and actually bent over and kissed it. He then moved to attend Ms. Beckett.

As I walked back to the car with our friends, I was sure the tiara he had bestowed with his gallantry was glittering in the moonlight. My tiara continued to shine, and I erupted in small sounds of mirth and happiness all the way back to Furnace Creek Ranch.



Sherl is a recent immigrant to Reno from Orange County, California. After 38 years as a public school

personnel director, she pursues her second career as a professional student and a volunteer in the field of gerontology.





Dancing

My Mind Goes Wild!

Ellen Guerricagoita

When I am thinking about a story related to dance, my mind goes wild! Dance has been a very memorable part of my life.

Where to go with this? Early years tap dance lessons, pre-teen social dance classes at a dance academy (not school), school dances from junior high school through college, in a class to teach dance in college, teaching dance in a college freshman dance class as part of the teaching-to-dance class lab, teaching dance every Friday as part of my high school student teaching, dancing at Reno's western band night spots, work-related dinner dances, social organization dinner dances, holiday related dinner dances, dancing on a cruise ship, dancing in Sweden, dancing in Spain, dancing at weddings, private party dances, or just putting on a few good dance records at home. For the most part, they conjure up happy and comical memories. I might just turn this dance topic into my own whole book!

I've come to a decision! I will unfold the saga of the Delta Delta Delta costume dance, which always

had a theme of "shipwreck." The costume was what you might be wearing at the time you had to abandon a sinking ship.

The first order of business was to decide who I was going to invite to escort me. Of course, to a sorority dance, the woman did the asking. I had no steady at this point, because I had informed the men that I had dated, "I am a career woman, and don't want any serious relationships at this time." There was one guy that I had gone to coffee with after class and he sort of intrigued me. So I gave it a go. He accepted the invitation and I gave him all of the particulars. (From this point on I will refer to him as "Bob"—that would be because that was his name.) I told him where and what time to pick me up, and to wear a costume. I said that I would be wearing a navy blue skirt, with a sailor blouse (with the square collar) and an authentic sailor cap that I had gotten from a friend of the family who had been in the Navy.

The big day arrives. The time is here. Bob pulls up to my house in his car. He comes to the door. He looks great, but he is in "standard go-to-the-

Meanwhile, my friend's parents offer me a drink,
rather a new experience for me . . .

movies clothes." He has on nice slacks and a button-down collar shirt. I say, "That's alright with me, as long as you feel comfortable."

We are off to a private cocktail party at a friend's house. We arrive, go in, say "Hi." Bob peruses the other people at the party and sees: she in tops and he in bottoms of the same pajama set; a lady in a merry widow bra with can-can skirts and he in boxers and tee shirt; she in a formal gown and he in a tuxedo; she in a towel and he in a towel (with bathing suits underneath, of course); she and he just in bathing suits; he and she in sweat suits, etc., etc., etc. Bob says, "Wait here; I'll only be gone a few minutes." I say "OK." Meanwhile, my friend's parents offer me a drink, which I accept. This is rather a new experience for me.

I sip and wait for Bob to return. I sip and wait for Bob to return. I sip and wait for Bob to return. Toward the end of the second drink, at last Bob appears in a long flannel night-shirt. Hurrah, he is getting with the spirit of the occasion! Then it was time for Bob to have a cocktail or two. No more for me! Finally we head out the door to proceed to the dance location.

He starts walking in one direction and I say "That is not the way to the

car." (I just knew that he was trying to confuse me because he thought that I had too much to drink). I said, "You can't fool me!" He, of course, brought me back to earth by muttering, "Maybe the same place that we parked when we arrived was not still available when, and I got back from my little side trip." I agreed!

At this moment he noticed the fine hedge that was growing around the property of the "cocktail party" house. It was about 3 & 1/2 feet high. I guess that he wanted to prove that he, too, possessed all of his faculties after the drinks and vowed that he could hurdle said hedge.

He also probably wanted to exhibit his athletic prowess to me because he knew that I was a Physical Education Major. He took a flying leap across the yard and landed flat on his "tushie" (we would have used another word in the fifties) because the lead leg, of course, pulled the back leg up with the stress of the nightgown's limited opening. Talk about embarrassed, but thankfully all that was hurt was his pride.

We did proceed to the dance and had a wonderful time. We did the Swing, the Waltz, the Polka, the Tango, and those "animal" dances: the Fox Trot and the Bunny Hop. The only frustrating part of the evening



He knew that I was a Physical Education Major.

was that Bob had to stop dancing occasionally to roll up the pant legs under his flannel gown when they fell

below the gown's hemline.

Bob and I did go out again, but not to a dance!



Ellen's first dance was a school dance at Northside Junior High School in Reno, Nevada. She attended with a neighbor boy who was in her class.

His father drove them to the school and picked them up when it was finished. The evening was awkward, but fun, and she has enjoyed dancing ever since that time.







Dancing

The Sad-Faced Girl

Bill Barnes

Once again 'Ole Capt. Bill takes another volume from the shelf of his library of memories. Here he finds a true tale of long ago that you will hear today.

Recalling this experience, again similar to all of his escapades, is like a reverberating echo through the canyons and valleys of his mind.

The year was 1933 in Oakland, California. 'Ole Capt. Bill and his friend Joe Alletto were in their sophomore year at Roosevelt High School.

As usual during their P.E. class they sat alone, not participating in the activities. They were different from all the others who had smooth bodies like newborn babes.

'Ole Capt. Bill and Joe weren't aware that they might be the missing links between man and apes. One clue was obvious—their hairy chests. They felt like the class freaks. Outcasts.

Apes or not, on Saturday nights, and not having to expose their chests, they attended the Dime-A-Dance Rose Ballroom in downtown Oakland—where they excelled in dancing. That is, Joe excelled. 'Ole

Capt. Bill was all left feet and the only reason he could get a partner was his ten cent ticket. He would save his dimes all week. Five dimes for Saturday night.

This was his first exposure to dancing, and he learned early that he was a flop. Backward, timid, no self-esteem, cowardly, and with only five dimes and five dances he was out, and finished the night sitting alone, feeling miserable and a total failure as a dancer.

Well, 'Ole Capt. Bill's dancing experience gained momentum in 1935 at South Fork Union High School, Miranda, California in Humboldt County. He was now a senior.

However, still backward, afraid to ask a girl to dance, he spent most of the evening waltzing to the wallflower theme entitled "On his behind."

But, alas! He spotted another wallflower. It's been such a long time ago he has almost forgotten her name (Carla Woodson). She wasn't beautiful, or attractive, really kind of plain and homely—sitting alone, unhappy with sadness in her face.

So 'Ole Capt. Bill, gathering up

He hopes, perhaps, that he might have given the sad-faced girl a few hours of happiness.

courage, walked over and bravely asked the sad-faced young lady if she would like to dance. Hesitant at first, she accepted and 'Ole Capt. Bill gathered her in his arms and waltzed her away and danced with her the rest of the evening.

At last a taste of success. It was an evening of accomplishment. At least 'Ole Capt. Bill was a successful failure. Also, he hopes, perhaps, that he might have given the sad faced girl a few hours of happiness. For she did for the Captain!

Also, she added more confidence to his dancing ability. Capt. Bill was eighteen years old.

Bill Barnes attended the University of California, Davis, until 1942, when he enlisted in Air Force Air Transport Command and was stationed at Borinquen Field, Puerto Rico, through 1945. Bill and his wife, Edwina, had three daughters: Carolyn and Leah live in Corning, California, and Elaine is a librarian for the Yuba College Branch in Lower Lake, California. Bill has lived in Reno since 1991.



Captain Bill, 1942.



Dancing

Johnny from Yale

Virginia Beer

While living at the Adams House on Martha's Vineyard Island, off Cape Cod in Massachusetts, my social life perked up considerably when the son of a local family came home to West Tisbury from Yale graduate school for the summer. His name was Johnny Whiting, and he brought some fellow students with him. He was a short, wiry fellow with a dynamic personality—rather a rebel, very unconventional. My family was a bit disturbed, but they decided that a Yale graduate student couldn't be too terrible.

After we started going together, I was included in all his beach parties and treasure hunts and clambakes . . . what fun we had! When he organized a beach party, he explained that it must fall on the night of the full moon. We would gather at sunset and roast hot dogs and marshmallows over a driftwood fire, singing old songs and telling stories as the sky grew darker. That was the magic hour. Seabirds called as they flew low over the shore on their way home for the night, and tiny sand crabs came up from their holes. They grabbed the

crumbs we tossed them and scuttled back to their burrows. Sometimes we would tease them by throwing tidbits too big to fit in their holes. They would put on a hilarious performance, tugging to pull the food down into their homes beneath the sand.

Then someone would point silently eastward. A soft glow was appearing on the ocean's horizon. Our conversation became hushed as we watched for the edge of the moon to appear. Slowly, majestically, it would rise out of the Atlantic . . . or so it seemed . . . until the full, round globe was free of the horizon, casting a flickering path of silver. That is why an East Coast beach party should always be planned on the night of a full moon.

Johnny's family owned a big sheep ranch, although I think "ranch" wasn't the term used in New England. They had vast pastures, stretching way down to the shoreline. Sometimes a crowd of us would swim down at the deserted Whiting beach, or we would have poker parties in an empty shepherd's cabin. Johnny would pick me up in his rickety roadster, and I thought the fenders would fly off, the way they rattled!

Johnny took his shoes off and talked me into doing it too.

There was a hole in the floorboards where I could peer down and see part of the motor glow brighter and brighter red as he raced over those bumpy Vineyard roads. That terrified me, but it was part of the adventure.

One day he asked me if I'd like to watch a sheep shearing. The hired men would herd the frightened animals into an enclosure and wrestle them to the ground, where the silly creatures would lie totally limp and submissive. The clippers looked like grass shears, except that they were run by a generator. The men worked with practiced skill, making it look easy, so when Johnny asked me if I'd like to try it, I said, "Sure." But those power clippers weren't as easy to handle as they looked, so I nicked the poor sheep and gave that up in a hurry.

When it was time to return to New York, Johnny would occasionally come down from Yale to take me on dates. Once we even went to the Glen Island Casino on Long Island, where Glen Miller's orchestra was playing. That was quite an evening, and he was a marvelous dancer. Unconventional as always, Johnny took his shoes off and talked me into doing it too, so we danced to that marvelous music in our stocking feet! It felt great!

The romance with Johnny came to an abrupt end after a football weekend at Yale, where I stayed with his married friends. In these free and easy days of casual relationships and unmarried mothers, it must be hard to believe that I refused to "go all the way" with any man, even Johnny. But my father had instilled in me his rigid Victorian morals, and I wasn't about to shame him. That was the end of it. Life with Johnny would have been exciting, but I wanted gentle, steadfast love, and also I wanted the life of an artist.



By the time she was five years old, Virginia Condict had decided she wanted to be an artist, and she never changed her mind. After going

to design school, she moved to Seattle and married her collaborator, Phil Von Phul. Unfortunately, the War put an end to the design business; then Virginia stayed at home for a while raising two sons. She and Phil moved to Hawaii for his health, and after his death, she continued painting and managing their art gallery on Napili Beach.





Dancing

The Last Dance

A. J. Barnett

My buddy Eddie and I graduated from high school in 1939. Eddie went to work in an industrial lab in the city, and I started college. Between school and work in the library, I had little time for anything else, especially any kind of dancing. Eddie continued to worry about my social graces. He was dating the daughter of one of the lab owners and wanted me to double date with them. I didn't know any girls well enough to ask them on a date, and I was less than enthusiastic about spending the little money I did have on girls.

Finally Eddie had my back to the wall. He had arranged a date for me on Memorial Day, 1941. It was a holiday, and school and the library were both closed. Eddie's girlfriend, Grace, lived in Palisades Park, New Jersey, and so did my blind date. The idea of two city boys going into the wilds of New Jersey was even less appealing. Who knows what might have happened to us in that distant place?

Eddie had been able to borrow Bertha, his family car, for the occasion. Bertha was a massive black 1929 Buick four-door touring car. It

sported chrome headlights that were larger than dinner plates. The back windows were decorated with colorful shades that could be pulled down for privacy. A flower vase decorated each side of the back seat. The dark velvet upholstery was very comfortable. We were to go on our date in style.

We started on what we considered a long journey, but Eddie was smitten. We drove Bertha across the 59th Street Bridge to Manhattan, across Midtown to the Holland Tunnel, under the Hudson River, out on to the Palisades, the impressive cliffs that offer a spectacular view of the New York side, then west down the sloping back of the Palisades to the small quiet residential town of Palisades Park. The whole trip took about an hour and a half, and to me, it was not worth the while. If Eddie was going to find me a girl it could have been closer to home.

Finally we arrived at Grace's house, which was a nondescript brick one-story home on the main street of town. The two girls were standing on the street in front of the house. I had never met Grace before, so I didn't know which of the girls was my date.



At her side was a strange looking bag that resembled a small bowling bag.

Eddie introduced the brown haired girl as Grace and my date as Viola.

I thought I had gotten the better part of the deal. This little girl was slender with shiny auburn hair, a winning smile, and was totally at ease with me. She wore a blue pleated, knee length skating dress that revealed a pair of attractive legs. At her side was a strange looking bag that resembled a small bowling bag.

I was still painfully shy and had little to say. After a few minutes of introductions we all got into Bertha and drove to the next town of Leonia, where an old movie house had been converted into a skating rink. In what was the balcony, a large pipe organ was pealing popular tunes. Below, the skaters were twirling around as they danced on the polished floor. I was aghast! I was not only expected to skate, but everybody was also dancing. Dancing on skates. I could hardly stand up on roller skates. Viola opened her mysterious bag and took out a pair of fancy skates that she said were her dancing skates. God! What had I gotten myself into?

After I had a chance to recover I rented a pair of skates that clamped onto my shoes. I explained to Viola that I was not a good skater. She understood, so we spent a pleasant evening holding hands and skating around the outer part of the rink. We talked a bit, but I had to concentrate on what I was doing, so I contributed

little to the conversation.

We stayed until the rink closed then took the girls home. As Eddie and I drove home, we discussed our date. Viola appeared to be a very nice girl, but I was not otherwise impressed. She also lived a long distance from our neighborhood. Eddie was in love with Grace and would have gone across the state to see her.

I returned to work and school and thought little about girls. During the summer months I worked full time at the library, but I did have an occasional evening off. Several months passed. I began to think about Viola. Our first date was a disaster, but maybe it was worth another try. I talked to Eddie and arranged for us to double date again; this time we would go dancing without the skates. He was enthusiastic about it, so I called Viola and was slightly surprised that she agreed to see me again.

This time we went to a casino near Fort Lee on the top of the Palisades. I thoroughly enjoyed Viola's company and managed to overcome my shyness. As I held her, I realized that she was a little girl with a comfortably soft body. She talked about her work in the city. She worked for Western Electric, where she kept an inventory and dispensed precious metals used in their products. She was eighteen years old and just out of school. I was twenty and a junior in college. I spoke mainly of my future



I had overcome one barrier: Viola's father was dead.

plans. I was a pre-med major and planned to become a physician.

After our second date I returned home with a sense of excitement that lasted for days. This time I didn't wait months, but called Viola the next week. I was feeling very comfortable with this little girl who made me tingle when I was with her. We cruised along the top of the Palisades, which was mostly wooded park areas. We stopped in one of the parks that had a spectacular view of the multicolored twinkling lights of the city that never sleeps. I was older now and didn't have to worry much about lightning striking me, but we followed the strict rules of necking etiquette. No groping or exploring. Just a lot of kissing and hugging.

After that date Viola suggested that I meet her mother. Things were getting serious. Viola lived with her mother in a small apartment above a store. It was furnished in a contemporary style and was comfortable. Charlotte Bouffanias was a French lady who had married a Spanish aristocrat, Fermin de la Parra. Their families had migrated from Spain and France to Chile in the mid- 1800s. Fermin joined the Chilean diplomatic service. In 1918 they moved to the United States when Fermin joined the Chilean ambassador's staff. Viola's father was described as an overbearing, proud man who would not have allowed me in the front door. Fortu-

nately for me, he had died in 1929. He may have been a good diplomat, but handled money poorly and left his family penniless.

Charlotte de la Parra was left with only two choices. She could return to Chile where she would assume the role of a poor relation and depend on her family for sustenance. Under these circumstances she would become a *Duena*: a person who was a chaperone to young ladies who were not allowed to go out in public unattended in that culture. The other choice was to stay in the United States and struggle to raise her four children. This was the choice she made.

When I met Viola, the other children had already left home. She was the sole supporter of her mother. Charlotte was a short, gray haired lady. She was a very intelligent woman who spoke five languages fluently and was thoroughly French in attitude and thinking. I had overcome one barrier. Viola's father was dead, so I didn't have to deal with him. I was allowed in the door, but was far from being accepted. The barriers to my approval were threefold: I was Irish, from New York City, and presented a less than healthy appearance, which meant that I had a debilitating disease or was a carouser. Neither was true. I was just a starving student.

My being Irish was a problem.

There was little I could do about being from New York, the city where evil lurked around every corner.

Viola's mother met with her French friends and decided that St. Patrick was French. My black hair and general complexion convinced them that my family had originally come from Normandy. There was little I could do about being from New York, the city where evil lurked around every corner. The small French community would defer its decision, but they would watch me carefully.

What had now developed into a courtship took a strange turn. My work in the library occupied all my time not spent at school. I was allowed one Sunday off every two weeks. I only saw my love twice a month. This hardly constituted a close relationship. Occasionally Viola would come to the library after work, and we would sit on the marble bench outside the catalogue room when I had a short break. Our love survived these long separations by peculiar means. I only allowed myself two dollars a week for spending money. The bus fare to and from Palisades Park cost a dollar fifty, which left only fifty cents for entertainment. Consequently, our visits consisted mostly of long walks when we discussed many things from the meaning of life to how many children we planned to have. Occasionally we went to the movies.

Several months after we were dating and I thought I had a good thing going, Viola sent me a message that she did not want to see me. This

was a nasty turn of events that left me puzzled. She wanted to test our love to see if it could survive separation. This sounded stupid to me. We hardly saw each other as it was. I was less than enthusiastic about the arrangement but obeyed. Little did my love know that she would later spend years alone. She wanted a two-month separation, but I managed to stay away only one month. This seemed to answer any doubts she had. We resumed our courtship. This was my first experience with the strange things that women do. I have never really been able to fathom the mind of the opposite sex.

I had yet to run the gamut of Viola's sister and two brothers. Her sister Nina approved. Her two brothers, Fermin and Raphael, were noncommittal. To me it didn't matter if they approved or not. Viola and her mother were the only ones that counted.

Now it was Viola's chance to be the subject of scrutiny. At the time, we lived with my grandmother in Woodside, Queens. One Sunday we visited with my father and sister Irene at Grandma Barnett's. My paternal grandmother was a genuine Shanty Irish witch. She was unpredictable, but this day we made sure she had her beer, and she behaved herself. My father Joe, and my younger sister, Irene, heartily approved of my love. That was enough for me, but we still



What I heard changed my life forever.

had some older cousins to deal with. We were invited to dinner at the home of some of my distant relatives who lived in an Irish neighborhood on the Grand Concourse in the Bronx. All went well until an old lady asked me why I didn't marry a good Irish girl. Viola was sitting next to me at the time. I replied that all the Irish girls I knew were snaggle toothed and stupid. A cool silence followed. That ended the conversation and the visit. I refused to accept any further invitations from any relatives.

We continued our semi-monthly dates until December 7. I was working that day. On an early afternoon break, I walked outside to sit in the lee of one of the famous lions and enjoy the weak December sun. The usual rush and bustle was absent. All the businesses were closed for the day. There were a few strollers enjoying the peace and quiet of Fifth Avenue.

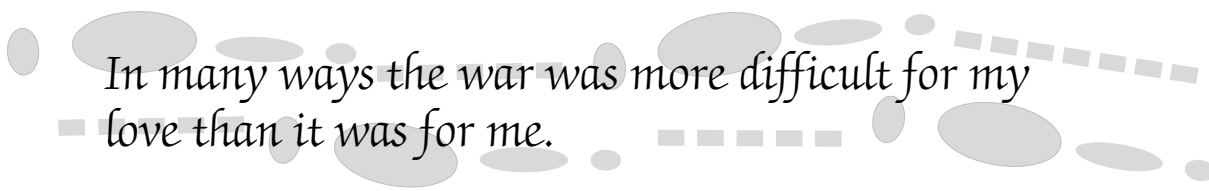
As I sat enjoying my break I notices several small groups of people gathered in front of the stores that sold radios. It was the practice of these shops to mount speakers above the entrance and broadcast the programs of the day. I was curious to know what was going on, so I wandered over to the closest group. What I heard changed my life forever.

The next day Viola came to the library after work, and we discussed our future as we sat on the marble bench. I feared that I would be drafted

into the military, which would end my education. When I arrived at school that morning, my fellow students shared my fears. There was a great deal of confusion on campus, and the older professors tried to assure us that we would not be drafted until we graduated. That was the process that had been used in World War I twenty-three years earlier. Most of my peers, like most young people, doubted what our elders advised.

For several days Viola and I discussed our options. Finally we decided that I would accelerate my studies, go to summer school, graduate early, and join the Navy. This created other problems. We would be seeing even less of each other. I depended on my job at the library to pay my tuition and fees. I could not afford the extra summer tuition. I solved this problem when I asked the President of Manhattan College if I could defer payment of my tuition and fees until after I graduated. He agreed without reservation.

In the early summer of 1942, I applied for Navy Midshipman School upon graduation. I was rejected because I weighed less than the minimum one-hundred sixteen pounds. This was a crushing defeat that I had not expected. About a month later I reapplied and still could not qualify because of my weight. Fortunately a doctor was passing by at that moment, and the corpsmen presented



In many ways the war was more difficult for my love than it was for me.

the problem to him. He said the Navy would fatten me up. I was accepted, and he was right.

I graduated from college in the fall of 1942. Almost immediately I was called up to active duty to Columbia University where the Navy Midshipman School was located. I was still in the city, but free time was limited to several hours on occasional Sunday afternoons. I saw my love only two or three times in the next three months. Upon graduation I was assigned to Yale University where I taught Celestial Navigation to the engineering students. I made the trip back to New Jersey only once during my stay in New Haven. I didn't join the Navy to be a teacher. I wanted to fight. After several requests for transfers that were rejected, I received orders to proceed to the Bethlehem shipbuilding yard in Quincy, Massachusetts, to assist in the installation of the navigation equipment on the Navy's newest aircraft carrier, the USS Hancock. I wanted to join the fighting Navy. I was about to get more fighting than I bargained for. The Hancock was inducted into the Navy in early 1944. We joined the fleet in the South Pacific and fought our way to Japan, where we were preparing for the invasion of the home islands when the war ended.

In many ways the war was more difficult for my love than it was for me. I wrote to her at least once a week and

more often when we had suffered damage. I wrote mostly so that she would know I was alive. All our letters were censored, so I could not reveal our location or mission. At home the newspapers would report damages to our ships without mentioning the dates. This led to a constant level of anxiety to those loved ones left behind. In August of 1945, after the war was over, the *New York Times* printed a photo of the Hancock in flames. We had suffered the severe damage on April 9 at the Battle of Okinawa, but the *Times*, in a show of poor judgment, did not mention it.

The fleet did not come home until the latter days of October. When we were about four days out of Long Beach, I foolishly sent Viola a telegram telling her that I would be home in early November, and she should plan our wedding on November 10th. This created an atmosphere of near hysteria in New Jersey. They had no way to tell me that ten days was not enough time to prepare for a church wedding, send out invitations to all our friend and relatives, arrange a reception, and gather a wedding dress and trousseau.

When the Hancock docked at the Naval base at San Pedro there were orders waiting for me to proceed within ten days to Seattle as navigator of a new carrier. This was a real disaster. I finally appealed to the Captain and he arranged to get me a thirty-day



*We were married with all the pomp and ceremony
of the time . . .*

delay. Next I had to get home. I wasted several days trying to get a flight out of Los Angeles without success. As a last resort I took the train—the Transcontinental Limited—to Grand Central Station where I was met by Viola and my sister. After a good long hug and kiss from my love she told me that they had planned to arrange a full church wedding and reception Saturday November 10th. I had arrived on Thursday and had only two days to get our marriage license, get a haircut, get my dress blues cleaned, and buy a new white shirt and hat cover. Remarkably, this all happened somehow.

On Saturday my best friend Ken, who was also a Navy officer, and I, took the bus to Palisades Park and walked to the church. There was one last thing I hadn't counted on. I had been serving in the tropics for several years and suddenly I was exposed to the cold blustery weather of the East coast. I felt like hell and had a one hundred and three temperature. We were married with all the pomp and ceremony of the time and left on our honeymoon, where Viola nursed me back to good health with her loving care.

That was fifty-six years ago. We suffered the death of our first child, then raised six healthy and successful children. Together we have survived the trials and tribulations, many successes and a few failures. Our love has grown stronger every day as we

enjoy our closing years. To me love is not to be confused with passion, which is fleeting. Love is based on mutual respect, sacrifice, and a bit of humor to get over the rough spots.

Finally my efforts at dancing paid off. I had a loving wife to pay for the effort. The dance when I met my love was a disaster. If I had refused to go on this arranged date I might have never met my companion for these many years. I had achieved my goal and have never found it necessary to dance again. That was my last dance.

Epilogue

Eddie's life in contrast to mine was a tragedy. Grace became a very demanding and overbearing person. She insisted that they marry in order that Eddie avoid his military obligations. Eddie's father was a World War I hero and was very saddened. Next she insisted that only Eddie's parents be invited to the wedding. Eddie had many relatives who would be offended by the slight. The net effect was that neither of Eddie's parents attended the wedding. I was an usher, and the church was filled with Grace's family.

Eddie and Grace had two children. Early in the marriage Grace divorced Eddie and remarried. After several years she divorced her husband and remarried Eddie. It became obvious to me that Grace was

That was my last dance

mentally ill. A short time later Grace developed a severe case of Parkinson's disease. Eddie retired, and for the next fifteen years he devoted himself to nursing his wife. Grace died in 1997 and freed this faithful husband and father from his bondage. He now lives in Arizona near his daughter.

After Viola and I married, Charlotte de la Parra went to work as a translator for a button manufacturer. A few years later, as plastic replaced pearl in buttons, the business closed, and Grandma came and lived with us. Our children loved her dearly and she was always a delight to be with. After several strokes she died at our home in Minnesota in 1968 surrounded by those who loved her.



A. J. Barnett was born in New York City. After college, he joined the Navy and served during World War II. He then went to

medical school on the G.I. Bill. He practiced family medicine in Texas and Minnesota before retiring in 1980.

