

LARRY'S CORNER

Volume 1, Issue 4

Come and Dance with us

August 2002

Lady from St Paul writes: I went to the Rebels dance Sunday night 7/29/02 and was turned down again by the same gentleman who claims he was hot and sweaty that said the same thing to me before. Then he got up and danced with someone else on the same song. Shame on him. What's up? Are we that picky who we dance with, maybe I need to go somewhere else, 2 other women were turned down by 2 other Men. The club says ask someone new you haven't danced with before. I did and got turned down. I did get a chance to dance, but I had to ask! Is it true men, that you must be asked? Things have changed. I guess I'll keep asking because I don't want to sit, thanks to the gentlemen who

came and asked me to dance.

Thanks Lowell and Jean for the great lesson at the B-dale club. It was c-o-o-l.

Cowboy Bill (Ron Schaefer)—We wish you a fast recovery. Hope to see you on the dance floor real soon. Your Monday night Ballroom class.

Do you have a story or helpful hints for dancing? If so, write it down and give to Larry Ablin or Barb Johnson. We will add it to one of the future News letters. If you don't know us our picture is on the back page

Getting A Swelled Head

As soon you have progressed beyond the stage of outright beginner, people are constantly telling you how good you are. Mostly, this is just meaningless. Out of tact, politeness or whatever people will very rarely tell you that your dancing totally sucks even when it does. Your friends will flatter you to make you feel good. Your instructors will say "that's good" to encourage you and build your confidence. People who know nothing about dancing will gush about how well you dance. Nobody will say "I'd be really embarrassed if I danced like you" or "that's really mediocre dancing". Further, even if people wanted to let us know exactly how well or

TGIS Dance is not just for dancing, even clowns do Karaoke



badly we were dancing, they wouldn't have the vocabulary. Mostly, all they can say are things like "that's not bad".

By George Callas, Phoenix, AZ (Reprint from *Jitterbug*; Vol. 4, Issue 2, April 1995)

THE TOP TEN SIGNS YOU DIDN'T DO AS WELL AS YOU THOUGHT IN THE LAST JACK AND JILL

10. The shoe lady discontinues the style of shoe you dance in.
9. The person who promised to compete with you is standing on a nearby freeway playing chicken with the semis.

[\(Continued on page 2\)](#)

[Next](#) [Home](#)



Singles all together, Dance Class

Inside this issue:

Getting A Swelled Head	1
J&j And Traditional Style Competitions	2
Singing, Counting Out Loud And Verbal Leads	3
Swing clubs	5
Dance Etiquette	5

[\(Continued from page 1\)](#)

8. The very worst dancer in the world says you were the only contestant on the beat.
7. The maintenance crew has to repair the floor where you danced.
6. Your partner's spouse gives you a hug and kisses you on both cheeks.
5. Forty minutes have passed and your partner still hasn't come out of the bathroom.
4. You wonder if the noise coming from the judges' area is snoring.
3. After you dance, people point and laugh at whoever is standing behind you; BUT, when you turn around, there's no one there.
2. You would have preferred dancing to "Baby Work Out" and then learned that you did.

And the number one reason:

1. Pieces of your partner's dress are still in your hand.

There is more than one "right" way to dance, but "There are very few dancers that have a "style." Most dancers have several learned techniques. Some dancers that do have a style include Frankie Manning and Mario Robau. 99.9 percent of all other dancers only have good and bad techniques. (Another sad aspect of reality is that anything done by a top competitor becomes, ipso facto, "correct" style. There were several examples of this at one U.S. Open -- routines that were very well done for what they were, but which were apparently choreographed with little or no attention to swing styling. But if you're a top competitor already you can get away with that, and win with it, because no one dares say you nay.) When you do something that you think is cool, but someone else says that it is not, do not use the excuse, "it's just my style," because it is probably just bad technique. Knowing that you can improve and can accept criticism is the

first and best step towards becoming a better dancer and developing sound technique."

J&j And Traditional Style Competitions

In the "Traditional" style of competition you have to start in closed position, you are supposed to dance to your partner - NEVER the judges or the audience, you may not wear costumes, the entire routine is supposed to look as if it is danced spontaneously and not pre-choreographed, etc., etc. The way to win one of these is to first elevate your social dancing to the level of competition dancing! This means always dancing as if you were in a Jack 'n' Jill or draw for music contest! You dance high intensity, concentrating on your appearance, etc. Project to the people who are watching you - it's OK to show off a little, just be sure to show your follower off more. Dance at the maximum level of difficulty your partner is capable of - challenge them but don't dance beyond them. Do this and you'll: have a MUCH better time when you social dance, tremendously improve your ability to do

[\(Continued on page 3\)](#)

There is more than one "right" way
to dance

[Next](#) [Home](#)



Sometimes you have to put your best side forward to make the move look good.

You want them concentrating on the music, their line of dance, and their footwork, NOT your words

[\(Continued from page 2\)](#)

Jack & Jill and draw-for-music contests, develop quite a reputation as a social dancer.

What are the judges looking for?

Here are the most important things in the order judges are supposed to look for. Overall, they start at #1 and work up:

1. Rhythm Are they on the beat? Can they stay there? A failure at this level puts a couple almost completely out of the competition.
2. Footwork (Mostly WCS and Latin) you can't syncopate when you are off balance, so this is a good indication of whether they are keeping their center under control and their feet under their center.
3. Is he leading? Is he indicating moves with his center, or his arms or not at all? Is he breaking his frame? Is he putting her off balance? Does he adjust to her while he spins her?
4. Is she following? Is her frame pointed at him or is she ignoring him? Is she putting him off balance?
5. Are they relaxed together? Eye contact and smiling? This is the non-physical part of connection. If they are making faces, I don't like it.
6. Do they feel the music? Are they accenting and counter pointing the music with their dancing? Or do they look like metronome dancers? This is the "catch the eye" type stuff and it can be done while dancing nothing more than basics.
7. Beyond the basics - Finally! They usually sorted out the competitors by the time they get to this level, so there just watching for neat stuff and/or mistakes. If there is a close decision between two couples, they usually end up spending the rest of the song waiting for eye-catching moves or mistakes by these couples. Below the bottom half of the com-

petitors my judgment is almost entirely whim. So if you get last place don't quit. Rhythm changes like struts or extended syncopation's are challenging to lead and follow, massive wrap moves usually stop the couple from dancing while they negotiate the intricacies. Many women go stone rigid in a wrap; most men plant their feet. You are living dangerously if you go with the killer moves.

Given two or more technically equal couples, the judges will look at other aspects of the dancing, like musicality, feeling, expression, etc. Otherwise, a technical but "boring" couple is supposed to beat a lesser non-technical couple that puts on more of a "show".

Singing, Counting Out Loud And Verbal Leads

Don't sing out loud along with the music. Hearing the song in your head to keep track of upcoming breaks is fine: but when people are lip-synching they appear to be "checked out" emotionally so they are not really connecting with their partner during the dance. I would far rather have my partner smile at me, or talk if it doesn't get in the way of concentrating on the dance, but leave the singing to the singers in the band or on the tape.

Likewise, never count the beats or tell your partner what you are about to lead during a dance. It's rude and if your partner can't follow your lead, it's because you're not leading well enough. Remember, the

[\(Continued on page 4\)](#)

[Next](#) [Home](#)



Minnesota West Coast Swing Dances are

Singing, Counting Out Loud

(Continued from page 3)

surprise element for the follower is part of the excitement of a dance. Verbal descriptions or step names are useless, distracting, and sometimes condescending. Half the time, the followers can't understand you, and the other half of the time, it makes them think about understanding you verbally rather than physically! You want them concentrating on the music, their line of dance, and their footwork, NOT your words. Leaders, Shut up and lead. If the followers don't follow, try it two more times. If they don't follow it on the third time, they're not ready or you're not leading it right. Either way, leave that move out with them. One follower writes: "I would want to hear "duck" or another simple suggestion if I am about to get injured. Counting is almost always irritating to me (although I confess I have done that to a partner who seems completely off during a dance class I am teaching)." another writes "I'm still glad to get verbal leads for shoulder rolls, which is a C/W move in which the follower spins with her head ducked and the leader's forearm skims the back of her hopefully ducked head; if she fails to duck, his arm hits her neck at high speed." Because of the contradiction just expressed ("It is wrong for a man to give verbal cues", then "I'm glad to get verbal cues for safety"), this presents a problem because the man's interpretation of when a safety cue is needed will not always agree with the lady's, and so he gets branded as

"rude": based on the lady's beliefs (which he must guess), he loses if he gives a cue she perceives as unneeded, and he loses if he doesn't give a cue she thinks he should.

A major part of any couple's dancing is lead and follow. It's what makes the dance what it is. The whole idea of dancing with someone you've never danced with before and leading her through a pattern (perhaps even one she's never danced before) is a wonderful feeling! - That's what it's all about! Telling your partner what you're going to do next completely destroys the concept of lead and follow. If you say, OK, let's try a whip, she's going to be thinking "whip" regardless of what you do. And what if she learned it a little differently than you did? If she's just thinking, "OK, I go there, then I turn then he goes through, then I turn again...." then there's no lead and follow going on....and if you do something slightly different than she expects, you're going to have a problem.... If I'm doing a relatively new move, I'll count to myself. I don't count out loud unless I happen to be dancing with a partner with whom I've just taken a class or workshop and we learned a new pattern together. Then it sometimes helps both of us if I count out loud. Also, I may count out loud if I'm dancing with a total beginner who's really struggling to keep the rhythm. And occasionally, I'll count out a phrase or two even if I'm dancing with more experienced dancers, if we

get out of sync... But as a rule, I try not to count out loud, even if I'm struggling, I keep it to myself.

Regarding telling the follower how to do the pattern that's about to be (or is attempting to be) led: the best guys don't ever do this. They don't have to, because moves work with them. They also have enough control over the dance, that they avoid accidents with other couples in crowded situations without talking to the follower about it. If they learn a new move, they practice it in private with a willing partner before they fling it out on the social floor with everybody. I don't mind if a friend asks me if we can experiment with a move she's playing around with if it's the end/beginning of the evening and the floor's empty. It is, however very insulting if a guy tries moves that he thinks he can lead but really doesn't do well, then tries to tell the follower how to do it, assuming that something's wrong with her if it didn't work. Women share notes on guys like this that are not complimentary, and they try to avoid dancing with them. Now, if your partner were at or near a pro level, and much better than you, I'd be more than willing to listen to what they had to tell me. But when an low-end intermediate dancer tries to instruct me, I'm thoroughly insulted. The only thing worse would be to email your partner to inform them why she couldn't follow his lousy

[Next](#) [Home](#)

Swing Clubs

East Meets West; 952-949-3016; 1st and 3rd Friday Dance at Dancesport in Hopkins 816 1/2 Main St.

Minnesota West Coast Swing; 651-731-9768; 2nd and 4th Friday Dance at B-Dale Club South of the Dale and Cty. B in St. Paul.

TC Rebels Swing club; Hotline number 952-941-0906; Dances are at Everett McClay VFW on frontage road of 494 by Mall of America.

When dancing West Coast Swing be sure to line your slot with the boards on the floor. If no boards then line up with length of room

Singles all Together has Ballroom lessons on Monday night 8 pm at the Lenox Center in St Louis Park.

Singles all Together West Coast Swing on Tuesday night 8 pm at Medina Ballroom.

TGIS dances will have free lessons 1 hour before Dance starting at 730 pm on the 1st and 3rd Saturday. There will be 15 minutes of Beginner to get people started, Then 30 minutes of intermediate. Then 15 minute practice till dance starts.

So for all you singles that want to learn to dance while holding each other come on out.

Dance Etiquette

Line of Dance is counter clockwise around the room for dances that move, like Foxtrot, and Waltz.

People who aren't moving like Rock and roll, Rumba, or Swing Dance in the middle of the room.

If you bump into someone, say sorry.

If you step on partner, say your sorry, then forget it. (Don't rag on it.)

Finish the song you started dancing to, before excusing yourself.

Don't do a step that requires kicking, on a crowded floor.

Dance etiquette offenders

Bulldog: One who does step or kick, no matter who is in the way.

Chatter box: One who is always talking. (Social talk ok but not constantly)

Crooner: One who sings or hums with music.

Debater: One who talks politics or religion while dancing.

Iceberg: One with no smile (At least look like your having fun.)

Jolly Extrovert: One who is cheerful with surrounding people, but forgets his own partner.

Quitter: Suddenly tired 1/2 way through song. (Finish Song)

Wrong way charlie: Clockwise traveler. (Against line of dance)

Larry L Ablin

Help at Singles All Together dance class on Monday night, at Lenox center on Minnetonka Blvd in St Louis Park.

Teach at SAT West coast swing on Tuesday night at Medina.

Teach at Jefferson Community Ed on Wednesday 26th and Hennepin

Phone: 952-891-9014 Email: dancempls@earthlink.net

Larry's Corner can be read online at [Http://www.dancempls.com](http://www.dancempls.com)



Larry and Barb will teach you to dance..

[Home](#)