

# LARRY'S CORNER

Volume 1, Issue 5

*Come and Dance with us*

October 2002

Hi Larry

I enjoyed your news letter, thought I comment on the letter from the Lady in St. Paul about being turned down. Turn downs are bad and not funny, yet I do not think the ladies have yet experience what some of the men have. So I am enclosing a response that you might use, if you wish. Thanks again and keep up the good work and lessons.

Biff

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

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## What To Lead When Social Dancing

"Do not do aerials on the social dance floor, especially with a dancer that does not know the aerial. This includes dips. Remember that people have bad backs. If you're going to dip, be cautious."

Aerials are something that you need to practice separately first, and with a spotter who knows what there doing. Save aerials for the show floor.

The main thing is that the woman is providing almost all the force in this move. You do not want to pull on her. When you both get the timing down right, it looks like you're slinging her around. Same idea as the move where it looks like the guy picks the woman up and tosses her into a back-flip. The man is mostly acting as a spotter, keeping her flight path in the right place. The woman is the one providing the momentum.

When I go out social dancing I follow a few rules of thumb.

The idea is for both you and your partner to have fun for the given dance.

I only lead steps that I have mastered to a certain degree. It is not fun for your partner to try and follow a step that is led poorly. So don't do it. Save it for practice.

For each of the dances I dance frequently I have a repertoire of a number of basic (or very leadable/ followable) steps. I also have a few fancy steps but I only use them when: I can lead them well. I think the follower can handle them, and everything else has gone smoothly.

If all of the above is true I might throw in a fancy step. Usually only one per dance. If done right it will make a good impression and leave a good feeling. So the "balance I am advocating" is do the basic steps because



Sat West Coast Swing Class

you do them well. If conditions are right do a fancy step but there is no need to over do it. One done really well will be more fun and make a better impression than any number done poorly. This will leave your partner with a good or at least neutral feeling. Which is much better than a bad feeling. I mean you do want her to dance with you again, right? Over time you will acquire enough basic steps and fancy steps to make a dance interesting to a wide variety of partners. Simple perfection is so much better than clumsy complexity.

Leaders, do not start with your most complicated patterns - start dancing basics. Once you feel your partner is connected and following well then try to do more advanced variations (if there is enough free space).

"If a follower misses a lead or falls behind, you can just keep the beat for an extra few

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Singles all together, Dance Class

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beats until the follower gets her balance back and is grounded again." Followers should come out on time and be ready to accept my Lead, but the considerate leader will notice if his follower gets off time and will wait for her to catch up, skipping a beat or two if necessary.

"If the follower is not responsive to a lead for a particular figure, do a different one and show the person that figure after the dance. A poor leader will force the follower through the figure. A good leader will compensate."

Leaders are in sort of a schizophrenic position. On the one hand, they're The Authority and You Shall Do What We Lead. On the other hand, they want to please, not only to make you happy but to make you want to dance with them again. A good Leader follows almost as much as he leads. While it is technically the guy's job to lead, it's also his job to stay with the woman if she misinterprets his lead or just screws up (meaning that it's the leader responding to the follower's actions, instead of the other way around). A good leader also doesn't lead moves that are unreasonable for his current follower.

Leaders: 1. Dance within your limitations if your partner is your equal or better;  
2. Dance within your partner's limitations if she's not as skilled as you.

Likewise ladies, if you try something and get a shocked look from the leader, cut it out. It is equally wrong to repeat something that disorients the leader.

"Know the difference between West Coast Swing and East Coast Swing. The two dances are different and mixing styles often leads to developing bad habits in the other style. There are similarities and many motions can be used in both, however, doing West Coast style East Coast Swing muddles up leads and can really throw off a leader's timing. That is, the follower should always be right with the leader maintaining the connection. Further, a follower can get thrown off by being in the slot sometimes and not being in the slot, etc."

Q: When two people are dancing together, and they have different styles, whose responsibility is it to adapt to the other, the man or the woman?

A: In a social situation, whichever one is aware that there IS a difference and can make the adjustment should adapt. But if that dancer is paying for instruction, they should be corrected. Then the student and their partners don't have to do so much adapting.

So you just asked someone to dance but to your dismay, you find that this person cannot lead/follow anything - he/she's so heavy to lead that you FEEL that you just want to STOP - in your mind, your dancing (as a couple) looks awful - and in spite of all these, he/she seems to be enjoying herself! What do you do?

Dance is a SOCIAL activity. Which means, it is more important to socialize than to dance perfectly every time.

Keep in mind that not everyone is interested in becoming good. For some, it is enough to just get up and do some vague moves, more or less in time with the music.

Everybody has to start somewhere. Where would you be if more advanced dancers refused to dance with you when you started out? Where would any of us be?

If your partner is below your level, dance at his/her level. Stick to basic, change of places, fall away-throwaway, etc. At the end of the song thank her and take her back to the table. You are not required to do more than one song.

Finally, how you LOOK dancing with someone, whether it's in your mind, or very real, is totally irrelevant (unless you are so insecure, or so vain that you care what people think about how you look for ONE song!) If you are kind and generous, she may realize how little she knows and start practicing. Who knows, one day she may be better than you and you'll wait in line for a chance to dance with her. If you are mean, she may stop dancing completely; she may go around saying things like "dancers are such snobs" etc. and that is a loss to the entire dance community.

Followers: "Don't anticipate." Just be responsive.

## Attitude When Social Dancing

What does it take to have fun dancing?

1. Good attitude (cheerful, tolerant) as opposed to bad attitude (worked up, critical). Good attitude is of course important to having fun. This is a universal truth not specific to dancing.
2. Good dance technique as opposed to poor dance technique.

I see four possible extreme combinations:

1. Poor attitude and poor technique (NO FUN)
2. Poor attitude and good technique (can be fun, if you don't feel insulted. I have more fun dancing basics with a beginner who is enjoying herself than a more advanced dancer who gets all worked up because I don't hold my arm just so, or dare to mix International and American patterns in Rumba, or some criticism of that nature. I have more fun dancing with my partner, with whom I can experiment and make mistakes and laugh about it, than with certain women of similar skill levels from local chain studios, who get disapproving expressions on their faces if I do one or two non-syllabus patterns.)
3. Good attitude and poor technique (can be fun, if you don't

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break an arm - most dancers don't enjoy dancing with someone who has actively bad practices, like the killer arm grippers, etc.)

4. good attitude and good technique (MOST FUN)

Given dancers with good technique, what can make dancing more or less fun? Attitude, of course.

Given dancers with good attitudes, what can make dancing more or less fun? Technique, of course.

Generally, the one with the worse technique has more fun. Part of the goal of having good technique is to help your dance partner have more fun. If you want to have fun, you don't need good technique -- just a partner with good technique.

But if you want your dance partner to have more fun, then you need good technique. There are elements of social dance that are purely social, where smiles, friendly conversation, succeeding in moving to the music and doing a few basic steps, etc. override whether your partner is leaning on you, jerking you off balance, crushing your hand, trying to step on you, etc. But an amount of technique that enables you to feel good and helps your partner to look good and feel good can only enhance the experience. Some competition technique does look stilted on the social dance floor; but a lot of the technique taught by competition coaches are things that make the dance feel more in balance, more fitting to the character of the music, and smoother to both oneself and one's partner. Sometimes not knowing precisely where to put a certain part of your body results in transferring momentum to your partner and throwing them off balance. The problem you face after you learn what good dance technique feels like, is that you become more sensitive to the bad habits of your partners. Sometimes ignorance is bliss, but the better social dancers are adaptive rather than ignorant. Those who can't or don't want to learn to adapt can end up paying their professional dance instructors lots of money. Otherwise, stop being concerned about your partner having fun, and just concentrate on having fun yourself; try Contra or Square or some other dance form where people tend to be less anal-retentive about "technique" but nonetheless enjoy dancing together. Fun is primary, because fun is what motivates people to continue dancing. If they happen to enjoy learning tons of technique as beginners, or they want to move right into competition, fine - but I don't think that's true of most people. What else is social dancing about, if not

- (a) Getting enjoyment yourself, and
- (b) Pleasing your dance partner?

To briefly reiterate:

When two people dance together, the one with the worse technique has more fun. (Assume a good attitude all around.)

Part of the goal of having good technique is to help your dance partner have more fun. (This requires a good attitude.)

If you want to have fun, you don't need good technique -- just a partner with good technique. But if you want your dance partner to have more fun, then you need good technique. (And a

good attitude.)

There's just no place for jealousy in the Dance Community. If one is of a jealous nature, going to a "real" dance is the wrong thing to do with a lover. Just walking into a dance, with all the hugs and kisses of greeting, and the additional ones after dancing, and then again at the end of an evening . . . well! If either partner cannot trust the other on the dance floor, there's major trouble. Non-dancers may get the wrong impression when they first start. Until they become familiar with the dancing community, there may be some confusion and potentially awkward moments.

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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

#### The Biff Opinion of Dance

I am addressing the Lady from St. Paul who was not pleased with the turn down of a dance. Perhaps try the gentlemen when he is fresh and dry. Who knows, he might accept.

It is unfortunate that you were turned down. But hey, for many guys a 2 turned down night would be a good night, and would be happy with that. I personally can remember being turned down one night by the first 5 gals that I had asked (and they were not yet hot and sweaty). I just got a plain NO from them, with out any explanation. Oh well, didn't not quit asking that night, and chalked it up to when you ask, there is not always a yes.

The best, no make that the worst, NO straight out lacking etiquette and showing rudeness, came from a gal that I never danced with before. I went up to her and asked her to dance. She acknowledged my request, and asks what type of dance we could do with the music. At that moment, another guy came up behind her and asked her to dance. She looked at him, then me saying "Well I going to dance" and walked away on to the dance floor with the other guy. I was amazed that a she could actually exist lacking a heart.

Anyway if you want to dance, and willing to do the asking. You will never always get a yes, there will be times you will get a No, or an excuse. That being I have to go to the bathroom (which they return back in the room in 20 seconds or less), I am tired or hot, do not like the music, ask me later (which they continue to use 3 times asking later), etc.

My question to you, do you really want and feel you can have a good dance connection with a person like that?

I don't and usually do not make the same mistake of asking twice.

Signed Biff

## 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.**

October is Niteclub 2 step

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.

## COME AND DANCE WITH US



Larry and Barb will teach you to dance..

## 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.

Lead foot: One who can't seem to lift one's feet from the floor.

Octopus: One who holds the partner everywhere but the correct dance  
position.

Quitter: Suddenly tired 1/2 way through song.

(Finish Song)

Sherman tank: The Leader leads her, but she isn't moving.

Truck driver: One who steers the partner like he drives.

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

## Larry L Ablin

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

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

Teach at Jefferson Community Ed on Wednesday  
26th and Hennepin Next class starts Oct 9 630  
pm

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*[Http://www.dancempls.com](http://www.dancempls.com)*

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