

### A RURAL DILEMMA

Lalu Westwood, a big-boned eighteen year old had ordered a worsted tweed suit to adorn his rangy frame. His father, one of the more prosperous farmers in the district, had built a new barn where a dance was being held the following night. This dance would provide an excellent opportunity to view, with a reasonable amount of safety, the country lasses in attendance. Lulu was very shy and quick to deny his interest in ladies, but the interest was there nevertheless. His rugged good looks and boyish grin won many a coy smile from the fairer sex, but, unaware of his natural assets, he didn't know if the girls were smiling or laughing at him.

The weekly arrival of the mailman, usually an event in itself, had a particular significance this week, namely the arrival of the worsted tweed suit. Pacing back and forth across the road, with frequent references to his West-cloz Dax which he extracted from the bib pocket of his overalls, Lulu was the picture of impatience.

A grey gelding, followed closely by a buckboard containing the weatherbeaten mailman, appeared around the corner. The suit was here at last. With the coveted parcel under his arm Lulu repaired to his bedroom to scrutinize and fit the garment. When he arrived in the kitchen clad in his new splendour it was immediately evident that a tailor had had no part in the assembly. It fitted yes, but only where it touched. Lulu's mother, a normal woman, was quite pleased to see the extra room. Was he not a growing boy? Why, in a few years he would fill that extra space and the life of the suit would be prolonged in that manner.

The next evening Lulu began his preparations for the dance. A dip in the brook with a bar of Ivy soap fulfilled one prerequisite. Shaving with Dad's straight razor was tricky business; the elusive fuzz was hard to get in a cutting position, but what he didn't cut off—he cut out. A raid on the pantry provided Baking Soda and Lard for his teeth and hair respectively. Toiletries completed, the logical thing to do was to dress.

His wardrobe, although strengthened by the addition of the suit, left much to be desired. There were two tan shirts (Mother didn't like white ones), three atrocious ties



which could be seen and heard and his old threadbare worsted tweed. Obviously he had no choice.

Dressing turned out to be a relatively simple operation. Tying a knot in his tie was a bit complicated because he didn't have much practice. Shoes, oh yes, shoes, they deserve special mention; originally brown, they had lost most of their former hue from exposure to the elements. Shoe polish was non-existent, so a slight rub with an old sock had to suffice. His headgear, in the finest tradition of the country, was a Salt and Pepper peaked cap.

The dance was a gala affair. The bright print cotton dresses of the girls made a sharp contrast with the conservatively dressed males. The orchestra was unique. The fiddler, a man in his early fifties, accompanied by two of his sons on the piano and guitar gave forth music that would set even the most puritanical toes to tapping.

"Fill'er up for a set". This timely thought circulated over the dance floor. The young men, eager to participate in the fun but reluctant to enquire into the partner situation, finally succumbed to their natural tendency. Some guys were lucky—they had sisters present which made the initial discourse easier. Not so with Lalu—None of his sisters were in sight at the moment. Anyhow he didn't think there was much sense dancing with one of his own sisters. Other boys' sisters were so much more interesting. There was one such girl he preferred to the exclusion of all others. Her name was Tida Craig. Towards this girl he awkwardly made his way. Enroute numerous doubts entered his mind—"What if she won't dance with me?" or "Has somebody else already asked her?" and, "Do I look all right?" These and many other disturbing fantasies entered his mind, but the thought of the new suit reassured him instantly. "How could she refuse?"

A pretty smile and a ready assent awarded him supreme effort. Away they went to join the other dancers. Lalu was as graceful on a dance floor as a cow on ice. The extremes of his long angular body were lacking, gray matter in one end, and direction in the other. You couldn't blame it all on his feet although they were the immediate cause of the incompatibility. The connections between the ends were maladjusted or his brain was not functioning properly.



Tida smiled bravely while making encouraging and innocent remarks to her young squire. But he thought she was teasing him. Instead of buoying his spirits, it fed his inferiority complex. It was then he made his decision to give up and go home to bed.

A vision of the debonaire chap he had dreamed of being this night faded. The predetermined strategy and tactics for the night were defeated. For days prior to the dance he had been preoccupied with thoughts of Tida. In his own mind he had rehearsed how he would approach her for a dance; the formula to be used to win her consent to walk her home; the arrangement of another meeting. It had all seemed so simple, but now it did not look simple at all, in fact, he thought it was impossible.

The music stopped. The set was over. A stammered "Thank You" and Lalu disappeared through the door into the darkness. At least he would stand by his most recent decision.

—ERNEST LARKIN '55.

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#### REPORT NO. 317-J

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Year, 2500

Report No. 1, submitted by Jan Kral, Spacemaster first class.

Submitted to Earth Security Council at 0300 lunas.

On my third muni in space, the ship was gliding in the state of free fall. I was carrying out my mission, 11Lk-o, tracking the course of the stray meteor swarm Arcon-X, which was threatening to invade the space lanes. Then all at once the ship's telemagnetio counter reacted violently, the dial swung to -32 on the counter, indicating the presence of a large mass of plutridium, an element used long ago in the plating of space ships. Immediately I fixed the ship's course, set it on the robot pilot and arranged the controls so that they would guide the ship to the mass of plutridium. Presently in about three centos I arrived at the source of the disturbance. I switched on the ship's televiewer to outer space and I must admit I was flabbergasted at what I saw. There in front of my eyes on the ship's televiewer I saw a derelict space ship rather needle-shaped in comparison to our disks. At once I surrounded the ships by a force field to prevent stray meteors from crashing into