

### THEY WERE DOING THE MUMBO

It was a dreary evening in July, ten years past, when I chatted amidst my school chums on the sun porch of father's cottage. As we sat and watched the unusual downpour I allowed my mind to wander in a weird fashion from the ridiculous to the sensible, or so it seemed. No doubt, the thundering roars from across the hills provided undesirable disturbances, yet, as I recall that evening, it paints an odd picture on the canvas of my memory.

What a fool I see now, as I reminisce. Then, but a mere seventeen-year-old, I was enveloped in the worrisome affairs of the average potential bachelor. Having but completed ten years of public school, I felt well prepared to confront the choicest of international problems. My ego was anything but dwarfed. Such tremendous potentialities were rocked beyond description as I pictured myself in a typical ball-room about to exercise my right to dance for the first time. Thoughts of this debut were disheartening. The specific difficulties imagined are now beyond my recollection. One thing I can recall is that my debut dawned much sooner than I had anticipated.

"It's clearing off, Joe," said Jack.

"Oh - - - What? Yes - - - yes it is."

"What's the trouble Joe?"

"Oh nothing, I guess I was almost asleep."

"Snap out of it old boy! Come along, you're getting too old-fashioned."

"You know, I think so too. I'll be right with you."

I ran into the cottage and pulled on my rain coat, remarked that I would be home early and left. As I caught up to the gang, I thought, "Where are we going? Oh I suppose down to Barney's for the habitual game of pool." None of us were professionals at this sport and least of all was I. Right then it didn't matter, anything to suppress a distasteful swell of pessimism. As I tagged along, alternately listening and day-dreaming, I unwittingly followed the gang through the doors of the public dance hall.

The strange lobby depicted anything but what I had imagined a dance hall to present. So I, like the others, hurled a donation into the jackpot and proceeded at their heels to the door at the far end. As yet, unaware of my predicament, I talked and laughed with the boys with natural



ease, till the door opened and released the music and commotion so appropriate. I was dumbfounded. A quick glance to the rear gave me to realize that my exodus at that time was impossible. Anyway I had paid my bit so, at least, I'd have a look around.

I went in and, seemingly, made myself at home. How well I can recall that night; charming figures dispersed among the rough and tough, the gentle and the gentlest and here and there the bashful. To this last group I easily adapted myself, but not for long. The other boys, who had been doing quite well for themselves gaily approached me and my lean-to and before long I found that I was saturated with the 'whys' and 'hows' of dancing.

I stood in their midst, longing to be any place other than that, steadfast in my refusal "to make a fool of myself." My refusal was undermined and caved in when an attractive sixteen-year-old, working on a tip from my pals, came up to me: "Would you like to dance, Joe?"

I looked at her, brushed aside beads of sweat and stammered, "But I - - - I - - - I can't!"

"You'll never learn younger."

"I know," I blurted, "but I'd rather make myself look foolish some other time."

"Don't be silly, Joe. Look at the others, they learned too. We all had our first. It's not hard anyway."

"Well - - - it - - - it - - - O. K., I'll try it, only let's get out of sight of the others."

We walked down the side, slowly and calmly, discussing anything but dancing. Entangled in her (Susie's) history, I followed her feet as we danced in and out among the seeming 'pros'. It wasn't too easy, but concentration on the basic steps produced favorable results. Susie complimented me on my progress and we walked back to the bystanders.

"May I have another crack at it with you later on?" I asked.

Susie looked at me, "Sure, Joe, I think you are going to be a good dancer in no time."

"Thank you," I said, "thanks a lot."

Disappearing in the crowd, I felt much at ease and quite interested, when "You did alright for an old fellow, Joe," said Dave as he put a dent in my spine. This made me



feel much more relaxed and I proceeded to puff on a cigarette as other young fellows did the honors of escorting the fair damsels onto the dancing floor. The dance that followed was amusing; they were doing the mumbo. It was a complicated trot, yet I was willing to try if I had Susie for a guide.

After a few more dances I mustered up enough courage to approach her again and this time I enjoyed the procedure still more. The first part was a recount of my previous experience, but the second part was the mumbo and, willingly enough, I was doing the mumbo before too long.

Now as I recall some of the thoughts which passed through my mind as I lay on my bed that night thinking about my first dance. Many of my dreams have since been realized. During the next few years I frequented the dance hall considerably and, having become quite proficient in the manly art of dancing, I began escorting some of the fairer sex to such amusements. About the age of twenty-three I contacted Susie, quite by accident, and, due to a lingering warm feeling toward her, made the necessary arrangements to escort her to the dance the following night.

She was the girl of my dreams and I was sufficiently interested to pursue my inclinations and after a few happy years we married.

Tonight, as I sit and recollect, Susie sits beside me and baby Joe is snoring in his cot at our feet. Those were happy days, when we were doing the mumbo, but these are happier, as others are doing the mumbo and we are enjoying life within the bonds of happy and holy Matrimony.

—CHARLES ROCHE '55

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The sublime and the ridiculous are often so nearly related that it is difficult to class them separately. One step above the sublime makes the ridiculous, and one step above the ridiculous makes the sublime again.—Thomas Paine.

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There is a higher law than the Constitution.—W. H. Seward.