
This is the third of a series of stories prepared entitled “Exceptional Dance Experiences.” This takes us back 38 years (ouch) to High School, where the raging hormones magnify everything and the smallest detail can become a catastrophe in a moment.



**High School
(needs help)**

Foxtrot, Sax and Piggy

I said, “We also do the bug.”

She said, “The what?”

“The bug. Want me to show you?”

“I was afraid you would ask me that”.

“You just imagine that your pants have some cockroaches in them and you are shaking them out of the legs, like this.” I then stood and shook my left and right leg in a rolling action, which seemed to cause ripples down my pants leg. From a distance, it looked like you were shaking bugs out of your trousers.

“That is disgusting.”

“Yeah, sometimes the girls say that. The Stalk and Zoom is something like your foxtrot, but we stretch out the arms and really clinch the girl. Here – let me show you.”

“No, I think I have seen enough. Look, if you want to dance properly and to gain any kind of respect, you need to learn the basics of the foxtrot, waltz and the triple-time swing. Now, let’s get down to work.”

This was my first high school dance lesson with my teacher, Lydia – 38 years ago, and we worked on the slow-slow-quick-quick and the triple-step. She never would let me get back to the Stalk (a swinging foxtrot – style action where you plaster your partner against you) and the Bug, but that is just as well, as Lydia’s dance lessons were to be my secret weapon on the dance floor. Little did I know that my desire to excel would have such a major impact that evening.

High School dance techniques are products of normal cultural evolution, just as the original invention of dance, which is called the “original art, and is the universal art”. The educational establishment failed to teach dance in school, so High Schoolers were left to develop their own forms of dance expression. With no frame of reference, that expression was somewhat crude, following dance history as an evolutionary sport.

Featured in Egyptian paintings, refined in the ballet by the French 5,000 years later, then hijacked by the Russians and imported by the Americans, dance only became a structured, institutionalized art form in the last 5% of all recorded human history. It was not until 1760 when the great choreographer Jean-Georges Noverre exhorted the dancer to “study how to make your gestures noble, never forget that is the life-blood of dancing”. So how do educational professionals expect the men to lead with nobility, when they leave dance teaching out of the curriculum?

They don’t, so the men lead by the caveman route – smashing women and squashing bugs.

However, tonight I go armed with my weapon – slow, slow quick quick in response to the Stalk and Zoom. I knew I would show off my abilities much to the amazement of my schoolmates, and especially to a special lady – Nancy.

I had a fatal crush on Nancy, and she had a crush on Ronnie, who didn't care for Nancy, and Nancy mostly ignored me. It was awful. Not even the eternal triangle – I had a stupid love rectangle. In High School, the raging hormones magnify everything (“did she look at me, why did she look at me?”) and the smallest detail can become a catastrophe in a moment. But tonight Nancy was my date at the dinner-dance.

So that night we were in the High School gymnasium, with students seated at white tables surrounding the gym floor, Nancy and I alone at a table in front of the low-rise stage. She wore a pretty blue dress, and I wore my white sport jacket for the first time. It make me feel important and on my best behavior.

That is, until the band started.

The saxophone player was seated right next to me and he had *some* problem. Every time he was to play he would lean forward and blast me in the ear.

“WOONK! WAPPA WAPPA WOONK!”

My head spun and my eyes got bleary. Nancy was talking to me but I could not hear her – nothing but that confounded bleating of the saxophone.

“WHOOOP, WHOOOP WEEBLE WEEBLE”

I could feel my eyeballs wobble in their sockets. I just knew that one more blast and he would blow my head right off my shoulders into my plate with roast beef, mashed potatoes and brown gravy; skitter off the table and bounce halfway across the floor before coming to rest at the goal marker with potatoes in my ear and gravy in my eyes. I just knew this was going to happen. I could feel it.

What happened next was a reflex reaction, not a considered thought.

“WORK, WORG WORG WOOA WOOA”

I picked up a big dollop of mashed potatoes and gravy and threw it into the throat of the saxophone.

“Orp orp urp orgl urgle”

The saxophone player started to turn blue (or green). He could get no satisfaction from that horn at all. Then he picked up the sax and held it up so he could look into the mouthpiece.

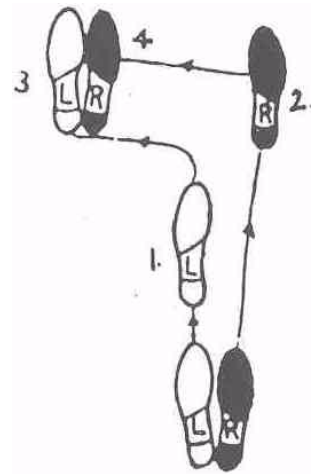
This was not good.

The brown gravy oozed out of the mouthpiece and dripped on his shoe.

“Yeoww. That creep ruined my sax. He ruined my sax. Ruined it. Ruined it.” He stomped around the stage pointing at me and gesticulating wildly.

“Easy, boy”, I said. “No harm done.” I tried to control a bad situation.

Then the school security police showed up. “Ok, now, we cannot have this type of disturbance, just follow us.” They escorted me firmly to the back door, leaving Nancy at the table with her mouth open saying something.



Then, (CLICK) I was out on the parking lot. Locked out of the dance. *Locked out!* And me with the \$20 dance lessons, and the fabulous dance steps I was going to show off, and my white sport jacket and shiny shoes, and my date with Nancy, and, and..

Nuts.

Just trying to protect my cranium. I kicked a white pebble at the tire marker. Now what am I to do? I leaned against the doorpost and thought, “What can I do to get back into the dance and make a real social statement?”

The idea came slowly (like getting indigestion), but I knew I needed a diversion and some type of disguise.

So I visited a country friend of mine, paid him \$5, and was at the gym back door again in two hours, with denim bib overalls covering my suit, a denim ball cap over my head pulled down low. The secret diversion was in the croaker sack inside a grocery bag, and I had to keep the secret quiet.

KNOCK KNOCK – I rapped on the door.

“What?” The guard asked.

“Listen, Franky on the drums wants these supplies. I am late because of traffic, and if I don’t get this to him, I will lose my job”.

“Where’s your ID”

“Com’on, give me a break. I came as fast as I can, and if I don’t get this to the band, I will lose my job and have to blame someone else, too.”

“OK, come in.”

I slipped into the backside of the gym and quickly darted to the bleachers folded along the wall like a giant collapsed accordion. The sack started to quiver. I looked out at the floor. They were doing the stalk and zoom. And then I saw her.

Nancy.

Nancy! Dancing with Rufus!

Are you kidding? I felt like I had been punched in the stomach; I felt weak in the knees and tingly in the spine.

This was a disgrace! Not only had I been banned from the dance with my superior steps, I see my girl with Rufus! I was going to die right there, behind the bleachers, and then be unnoticed until the next game, when they would see my body stretched out holding the croaker sack, still wearing that dumb hat.

They started doing the bug. Some girls walked off the floor in disgust, and I could not see Nancy. So I gathered myself, and purposefully made my way across the floor, holding the grocery bag with the



croaker sack inside. And inside the croaker sack my secret diversion – a baby piggy slathered with Vaseline and sporting a yellow ribbon.

My plan was to dump piggy on the floor and move to the side. The piggy should distract everybody and then run to safety behind the bleachers. If I was quick, I could change behind the opposite bleachers (just like Superman) be back with Nancy, and protect her from Rufus. I bent down and let piggy out gently. It looked confused, sort of, and then scampered off.

“*EEEE! A PIG! A BABY PIG!*” This was the Elvis generation, and all the girls were well trained in how to scream. “*SHREEEK!*”

Unfortunately, some dumb football player tackled the piggy. Now, you just cannot easily hold onto a baby piggy, and when it is really greased up – it is impossible. The piggy squirted out of the player’s hands like a hot dog on a ketchup-soaked bun “*SPLUT*” and landed on the chest of a well-endowed cheerleader. Piggy then proceeded to do what a piggy will do – that is, run - “*SQEEEAL*”.

This caused what four decades later would be termed a “wardrobe malfunction.” The girl screamed, “*AIEEEE*”. Her date shouted, “*GET HIM! I SEE HIM – THE DOOFUS WITH THE HAT!*” Pointing at me.



Nice little piggy

They grabbed me - maybe four, five, seven guys. And then I felt myself being raised up in the air, just like on the football field after scoring a major touchdown. Off across the room I could see them diving for the piggy, who would squirt out of the guys’ arms and vault up into the air over the heads of the dancers. Other girls were restoring the cheerleader’s mangled dress top.

“*SQEEEAL*”

“Don’t you apes hurt my pig, I just rented him! Don’t hurt my piggy”

Carrying me, they banged the front double doors open, and I, still held aloft by my assembled retinue, proceeded down the walk to – the water fountain, where the deposit was made.

“Splash”

“And here, take your stupid pig, too.” They tossed the piggy (now cleaned up nicely after being wiped clean by all the coats of the players).

So I sat there, alone in the water with my piggy and its soggy ribbon, wondering what made the evening go so wrong. After all, I just wanted to show off my new dance steps to Nancy.

Later in the year, I read in the school newspaper a summary of the year’s social affairs.

“..but by all accounts, the school dance with the baby pig scene was the most exciting of all.”

Aahhh. Success.