

A FALL, A WRONG TURN AND A DANCING MOUSE

by Fred Hobbs

As one who loves to write, I appreciate the challenge when a given subject is one along this line: write about your *favorite* something (movie, food, vacation spot, etc.).

The task is a bit more daunting when asked to reveal your most *embarrassing* moment. That's the drill required for this piece. Three possibilities emerge, each approximately equal on my scale of embarrassment. They happened at three distinct points in my life and all three involved a decision I was required to make. In reverse order of occurrence, they involved a fall, a wrong turn and a dancing mouse.

Several months ago, I wrote in this space a detailed account about the fall. I'll summarize it briefly. It was my unceremonious tumble from the stage of an unexpectedly darkened theater while I was acting as master of ceremonies at a folk music concert in Denver in the 1960s. Grabbing for the curtain in an attempt to go backstage after bringing on the first act, my hand slipped, I lost my sense of direction and a moment later, after clattering over some chairs and music stands, found myself on my rear on the floor of the orchestra pit. Though my body wasn't injured, my pride was. My embarrassment was enormous.

One would think I had never had such an experience in the dark before. One would be wrong. Several years prior to the theater "caper," I was involved in a nighttime simulated infantry combat mission during Army basic training.

The patrol to which I was assigned was supposed to hunt for another unit, join up with them and return to our base camp. Somehow, I took a wrong turn and found myself alone in the dark of the California night surrounded by nothing but a few trees and scrub brush.

Determined not to cry for help and fearing the wrath sure to come from the field first sergeant, I stood still for a few minutes that seemed like hours. Fortunately, the entire company had formed up at the camp. I heard their chatter and headed in that general direction. Luckily, I found the other members of my patrol and, thoroughly embarrassed, slithered in among them just seconds before the sergeant brought us to attention shouting out our individual names for roll call.

Long ago, when I was in sixth grade, the Denver Public Schools held an annual citywide event called The Play Festival. Our school had rehearsed a Walt Disney dance with six boys to be dressed as Mickey Mouse and six girls in costume as Minnie. Trouble was, one of the girls had taken ill just before the performance and was sent home. I was on the stage crew and the teacher was aware that I knew the routines. She half-ordered / half-pleaded with me to dress up as Minnie and fill in on the "chorus line." I was mortified, but even more uncertain of the consequences if I didn't play along. So I did.

After the show, I received a little kidding, but mostly kudos even from my male buddies in the

class.

Ever since in my professional endeavors, embarrassment or not, I have tried to honor the old saw, "the show must go on."