

## Dancing

*06-30-2014 by Harry Zirkelbach*

At some age, an awareness creeps in; each is destined to be a modified clone of their parents. This insight develops over years. Overhearing, “so-and-so looks like their mother or father”, helps. None suggests the child looks like the President, Einstein, the Pope, Miss America.

Then, notably in weight and height, the child sees some likeness in their friend with that tribe. Slowly each begins to look more closely at parents, their tendencies And questions; is that destiny? How can I escape?

Parents are inclined to exaggerate their children’s capabilities to everyone, building that child’s confidence. Alas, only in Lake Woebegone, is everyone above average.

And so these fact; the parents were short and thin; the grandparents had been robust and tall. Mother was 58 “ tall, dad 62”; both weighed a muscular 130 pounds, were devout Catholics, outgoing, loved friends and games, weren’t agile, sang yet never danced, laughed easily. Hint the children’s future.

In early high school years, teachers and family friends began teaching these children to dance. It was the years after the Charleston, before Jitterbug. Music tended to be slow, encourage the feet into rhythm; and really, what is so complex about the box step and its companions. Suddenly on mastering this simplicity, conversation with the opposite sex came natural, personal, almost enjoyable to both partners of the dance.

Then outside the school and Church socials dances, the late 1930 brought the New York and Chicago Big Bands to many train stops between these mega-cities.

It happened that the Tommy Dorsey band came that summer to the city’s Lakeside Amusement Park’s large bandstand. Fiends from school got dates and tickets; had room in a car for another couple, and the boy asked the girl across the street to go; she accepted. His first “date”. She was his age, very pretty.

Needless to say he was surprised to see how stunning she was in white, She danced every dance, usually with her date. Quite soon it was not lost to either of this young duo, that when the Dorsey’s music involved a solo by the young skinny Frank Sinatra, he singled her out, sang to her as they drifted about. She became

the very pretty thing in each romantic song; Frankies eyes and song followed her as she whirled, glided, floated everywhere. She reveled the attention. Aware, her partner found new energies and graciousness, knowing he wasn't the cause of this attention. Yes, other dancing couples noticed, courteously gave them plenty of floor space.

When the music stopped and the dancers left for home, conversation with their friends was spirited. Friends thought she must have known Sinatra from some family connection, asked related questions. Actually the evening was a huge success; classmate were envious. Some fellows later asked his date out; she refused.

And while they saw one another as neighbors, it was years before they danced together again; but the spark was gone; Ethelyn was still beautiful, but he was a klutz without Dorsey and Sinatra. Like the music had stopped. Neither was unhappy they stopped seeing one another socially.

My brother-in-law had lived in Denver, moved to Washington D.C., retained ties with friend here. He send friends a several page Christmas Cheer letter for years. The opening paragraph containing a statement, "As we write no one is in jail." As you note, none were excluded. His letters were always cheerful and factual.