Jazzed up retiree steps out

Disco therapy helps old man

United Press International

HOUSTON — Logan McGowan well knows if the spirit's willing, the body won't be far behind.

And by his gyrations you will know the 79-year-old "semiretired" insurance man as he swings, shuffles and sways to the vibrating, pulsating and cacophonous tunes blaring at a half-dozen hot spots nightly.

For the last year and a half he's been coming to the discos with his steady friend, Betty Ellis, a mother of four and grandmother, where he does his high-steppin'.

"You can't sit still. Neither can she...She wiggles like hell all the time. I just love the stuff."

"I always liked to dance," he said while a "bellyrubber" (slow dance) was in progress at Tingles, his favorite nightery. "I used to live on the border. And those Spanish girls taught me how to dance. I had a lot of Spanish friends. I knew a lot of girls."

Dancing was one outlet for many years. But it is the disco scene that sets Mac's toes to tapping and his fingertips drumming the table around the scotch and water he keeps within reach.

"I prefer this disco dancing to anything. It just stirs you up. You can't sit still. Neither can she," he says, casting an eye to Betty. "She wiggles like hell all the time. I just love the stuff.

"I like the beat. It goes bam! bam! bam! bam! (now pounding his fist into a broad palm)

"What's your number? What's your name? That's how I stay young," he said. There is staccato-like delivery as he talks about himself.

He knows all the singers, disco jockeys, managers and waitresses at his favorite hangouts.

Betty is a steady companion on Mac's nights out.

"I met Betty (at a church social). She likes to dance. I don't care anything about the exercise, I get that every day. It's a pleasure," he said. "I bring her Tuesdays and Saturdays. But I come Thursdays by myself."

Coming alone is no barrier for Mac.

"We dance the fast ones and sit the slow ones out. They work eight hours a day and are tired. But I'm not."

"I come out here by myself and these young girls say, 'Come on let's dance.' Age is no barrier out here—at my age. They know me. They're all friendly. Congenial. I got a lot of acquaintances out here," he said.

"If I see one I like, I get her. I have trouble finding anyone to dance with. I have fun. If I don't find somebody, somebody will find me."

There is no generation gap on the dance floor, although Mac's light-colored business suit is a shade more conservative than the polyester prints and goldmedallioned young men with their manicured hair styles.

"We dance the fast ones and sit the slow ones out," he said. "They work eight hours a day and are tired. But I'm not."

"I still work eight hours, you turkey," Betty said, nudging him in a gentle reminder.

Mac lives in a quiet neighborhood near Rice University. His wife died six years ago and his readjustment called for self-imposed dance therapy.

"My niece told me, she said, 'Mac, go have fun. We don't need your money. Spend it. Go places,'" he said.

"I take vitamins. I have a lot of energy. Thank the good Lord. I wake up every day, I pray, ahead of the game. Don't do anything wrong. Feel good. Drink a little scotch. But dancing is my life. Keeps your ego going."

The 'rain, rain' went away

Mel Mehrtens and Georgia Grubbs took advantage of a lull in Monday's thundershowers to sit by a fountain near the MSC. Mehrtens is a junior agriculture education major, Grubbs is a junior English major.

Battalion photo by J. Wagner Ty

'Godfather' of bridges plan to link Italy, Sicily

United Press International

ROME — Evoking a dream that began with the unification of Italy in 1862 but has roots in Homer, a state-backed consortium wants to build the world's longest suspension bridge between Italy and Sicily.

The bridge across the Strait of Messina, a notoriously rough and turbulent stretch of water, would have a central span twice as long as San Francisco's Golden Gate bridge and New York's Verrazano Narrows bridge put together. It would extend more than two miles.

Its two massive suspension pylons, one on the Italian mainland and the other on Sicily, would tower 1,250 feet into the sky, making them nearly as tall as the World Trade Center buildings in New York City.

When Public Works Minister Gaetano Stammati gave government approval for the bridge July 22 he merely repeated an order Prime Minister Emilio Colombo gave in 1971.

But Colombo's government fell, and his grand notion with it, leaving the project on the drawing board.

The dream of a bridge across the strait Homer described — between the mythological monsters of Scylla living in a cave on the Italian side and Charybdis in a whirlpool off Sicily — has intrigued Italian engineers and politicans for more than a century.

But a geologically unsound sea basin — a 1908 earthquake devastated Messina and killed 75,000 people — kept the dream in limbo.

That situation prevailed unti Gruppo Ponte di Messina, a co tium of public and private ind including Fiat and the powerful steel company Finsider, relea 30-volume study on the projec

The cheapest solution, estim to cost $1.4 billion and approve Stammati for government stu by far the most spectacular.

It calls for a bridge that w stretch unsupported between steel pylons and hold six traffic l and two railroad tracks. It would seven years to build.

But there are problems.

Communist and Socialist party ficials are doubtful the bridge ca kept to cost. They fear that if consortium runs short of cash, t state, which holds a 51 percent in terest in it, would have to pick up the bill.

Student on probation for cat cruelty charge

By SCOTT PENDLETON
Battalion Staff

A Texas A&M student Tuesday was placed on 90 days probation and ordered to pay a $444 veterinary bill on a cruelty to animals charge.

John R. Garza, a senior in chemical engineering, had pleaded guilty to the charge.

Garza had been arrested Aug. 22 for actions two days before that caused a cat to suffer a cracked lower jaw, a shattered hard palate, two broken legs, several broken teeth, and bleeding in the chest cavity.

A graduate student who said he saw Garza "fling" the cat from a second floor breezeway took it to the emergency section of the Texas A&M small animal clinic.

Veterinarians treated it for shock and other injuries. Surgical pins and stainless steel wire were required to repair the cat's palate and one legs.

The graduate student then cal member of the Brazos Co Humane Society, who alerted police. Garza was arrested Aug and subsequently released on bond.

Garza told The Battalion that cat was a stray he had often fed said he had had a bad day Aug and took his frustrations out on cat. He threw the cat from breezeway, he said, and later k it from the breezeway when turned.

He said he later regretted the "I feel like hell for what I did," G said.

Cruelty to animals is a m demeanor under state law puni ble by a maximum of $2,000 fine two years in jail.

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