



HOMER CROY GOES TO A DANCE AT READ HALL

Editor's note — While not entirely a thing of the past, school dances no longer have the important place in the campus social whirl that they did 50 or 60 years ago. The 1914 Savitar took note of several dances in chronicling the events of the year, one being described by Homer Croy, a former student then writing in China. Croy, who died in 1958, later went on to become a well-known novelist and historian and wrote many of the screen plays for Will Rogers. Monte Crews, the article's illustrator, was also a former student and won fame as a magazine cartoonist, first in Kansas City and later in New York. He died in 1946.

It was a big day in my life when I got an invitation to a Read Hall dance.

I was never meant to trip the intricacies of a waltz; I was meant more for checkers, dominoes, flinch and other sitting pastimes. It was never planned that I should get on my feet out in the midst of a happy, care-free throng. I am built too much on the Woolworth Building style of architecture to do much along the light fantastic toe line; I am tall with a budding balcony effect about the thirty-third story and with feet that were never intended to be used on a waxed floor.

The morning that I received an invitation to a Read Hall dance I was always so excited that I would miss my breakfast, and the afternoon I would have to take off so that I could go on a long walk by myself and think things over. From then on I couldn't get a full night's rest for thinking and planning what I would say when anybody spoke to me at the dance, and what was the right way to address a girl in an evening gown. I was afraid to go, yet my moth instincts drew me toward the terpsichorean candle.

On the morning of the dance I would wake up with slight traces of fever; by noon I would be mumbling incoherently and by time to dress I would be impatiently walking the floor, wiping off the cold beads and trying to think of some way to open the conversation after being presented to a girl. I could never decide whether to begin by saying, "We are enjoying a beautiful evening tonight, are we not?" or whether to be a bit more intimate and say, "If you will allow me to say it, Miss Williams, you are looking finely tonight."

I would want to go in style, so I would charter one of Dan Hulett's Louis XIV busses. It seemed to me that one of his rigs was about the last word in the way of dog, and that Mrs. Potter Palmer would break down and weep like a child for a chance to be seen going down Hitt Street in one of them.

The nearer I got to Read Hall the more

frightened I became. By the time I was ready to get out of the rig my lips felt as though they had been left out on the back porch till the sun had got around to them, and when the maid came to the door I could hardly make her hear for the clanging of my heart.

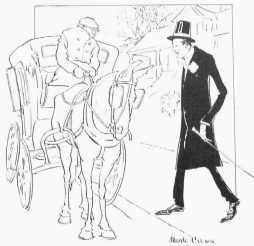
Worming through the crowd, I would go to one of the rooms to leave my coat, and hat, and always the horrible suspicion would come over me that I had lost some buttons or that something was showing, and then I would look around for a mirror but there was never one to be found larger than a 1908 Bryan button.

I would stop at the top of the stairs a moment to look down upon the crowd. Below me was a sea of faces. The place seemed full of men, and more were pouring through the door every moment until only here and there was to be seen a girl tossing on the angry waters.

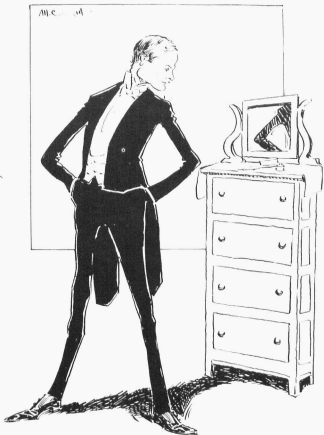
With my arms down by my side I would start through the crowd; by the time I got to the piano they would feel as though they were inlaid.

I would make for my girl, but the floor was filled with other fellows who had also thought of the same thing. The place was cluttered with men who had good girl judgment — and who had got there just a little ahead of me. As I stood on the outer skirts of the crowd, waiting for a chance to slip in and say a courteous and carefully selected word to her, I would spend my time thinking what I should like to do if I caught some of them strolling along the banks of the Hinkson alone — but the trouble with my plan was that nearly all of them looked as if they would make the Varsity.

When the beef began to clear away so that I had a chance to shoot in and ask the fairest flower on the floor to use my arm through the mazes of the next dance, another fellow with a leer on his face and a Vic Barth fit to his dress-suit collar, would step



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out from behind the potted palms and lead my girl off.

I would follow them around all evening trying to get a chance to tell the girl that she looked finely — that sounded like society to me — and would she flit the next number with me? She would give just one glance at my perspiring face, arch her shoulders and say that she had as much flitting on hand as she could do that evening.

The only way that I could get a girl to talk to during the evening was to get her into a corner and pen her with my feet. Once I enticed her off into a corner by herself, I had her

until some of the young athletes banded together and swooped down upon a tall, nervous young man with a couple of vibrating knees and who had a pair of hands that rarely ever ventured out of his pockets. Before they could start up the music they had to clear me off the floor, and a couple of times around my feet was considered a pretty good dance.

There wasn't much satisfaction in it for me to go to one of their dances — they had such poor dancers. Every place that I would go they would be in my way. When I would start to whirl, another student with



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pointed elbows would start to do so at the same time, and when I would try to reverse I would find my path blocked by a young man from the training table with finely knotted muscles. Every time I started to make a run there would be a stampede of small frame students for the corner, and every time I fell down I was good for at least three couples.

Word would pass from mouth to mouth, when I was getting ready to make a double run, and all the young men who weren't going to gymnasium regularly and girls with nervous hearts would run and crawl up the steps. I wasn't much on the intricacies of a polka, but

I made a brilliant showing when it came to going through a formation.

One by one the couples would grow discouraged and leave, until only a few "M" men and myself would be on the floor, and as I paused at the door to say good night there would be a strange expression of thankfulness and a quiet happiness on their faces that puzzled me.

When I would get home that night, I would make up my mind that I wouldn't go to the next dance — and when time came for them to send out the invitations I would find that the Read Hall girls thought that way, too. □