

Tasteful Native Costumes

Shortly after Snell and I married, we agreed to chaperone the graduating class of Duluth High School on a cruise to Nassau and Freeport. We had a stop in Puerto Rico for an evening, and a bunch of the boys wanted to go into the port. They didn't feel comfortable enough to go by themselves, so they approached us about going with them.

We agreed and went to the concierge's desk to find out what was available in town. There were very few choices, but the concierge told us about an upscale dinner show. It sounded wonderful. The dancers performed folk dances in tasteful native costumes. That sounded safe enough. He suggested we take a taxi, so we wouldn't get lost.

The boys all went back to their rooms and dressed in coats and ties. Snell and I got all duded up and met the guys at the debarkation ramp. We hailed a taxi to head into town. This was the first time for any of us to ride in a taxi, and all of us were crammed inside the vehicle. I think there were either six or eight of us. We were off on a great adventure of firsts. I was in Snell's lap, and the boys were mushed up together. Lots of excited laughter flowed from the taxi's windows.

The first thing the taxi driver told us was not to walk around on the streets. He said to have the restaurant call for a taxi before we went outside and then go out only to get into the car. OKAY. Maybe going into Puerto Rico to this nightspot wasn't such a good idea. Snell and I had a bunch of seventeen and eighteen-year-old young men with us, and we were headed into an area of such disrepute that even the taxi driver warned us away.

Well, we went through some interesting parts of town. We saw lots of people lounging against old cars. Many were smoking and drinking from shared bottles. Several young and not-so- young women were, ummmm, there, too. The boys were quick to point out the various makes and models of the old vehicles, and, thank goodness, they didn't pay a lot of attention to the, ummm, entertainment that the men and women seemed to be, ummm, having in and around the cars.

Yes, we were driving a bunch of innocents into the heart of the den of iniquity.

We arrived at the restaurant, which was brightly lit and was very attractive on the outside. The interior, however, was nearly as black as the innards of a buzzard. After we cut through the smoke and were seated, we had a good vantage point facing the stage. We were placed at a long table, not across from each other but side by side. We assume the purpose was because the floor show was so good that the restaurateur didn't want the audience to miss a minute of the artistry of the folk dances and tasteful native costumes.

All of us were excited, laughing and talking together. None of the boys nor myself had ever been to a real live floor show. We didn't know what to expect, but the meal was good, and the music playing was quite nice. Then, drum roll, the show began. The

audience lights dimmed even more. If it hadn't been for the people at the next table smoking like chimneys, we would not have been able to find our forks.

The curtains parted. The dancers came out wearing elaborate feather headdresses and long feathered capes. Beautiful. The lights were colorful, panning around the room showcasing the various outfits. The dancers' backs were to us, so we could see the glorious flowing capes and the long trailing headdresses. Slowly, as a group, the dancers started moving, their feathers were gliding with the music. The dancers turned around to face the audience.

Yep, we saw some really creative dances with lots of interesting gyrations. And G-strings. Males with stuffed G-strings and females with overflowing tassels that could spin in different directions.

The trip back to the ship that night was rather quiet. The boys were a bit stiff in their demeanor. Snell was trying really hard not to laugh, and I was speechless. Who knew the bump-and-grind were native dances and gold lame was a traditional native fabric?