

"... gets the blood circulating and keeps the legs in condition...."

George W. Lyon

"It can be very difficult to fit the steps to the music [on new dances]—you have to fit each step to the musical measures. Sometimes I despair of getting it. We spend two hours on some dances!"

Al Park was born in 1913 in the Bankview district, south of the Bow River in Calgary; he grew up north of the river in Mt. Pleasant. He danced a bit as a teenager, a girlfriend teaching him to waltz and foxtrot. He had a couple of years in civil engineering at the University of Alberta, but "the money ran out," and he had to work in his father's nursery. To this day he claims to dislike gardening, doing only what's needed, but he is an avid handyman and modeller. Work and other matters kept him from doing much dancing during most of his adult life, but some 15 years back, Esther, his neighbor, suggested that he try going to the Kerby Centre downtown, for their Wednesday afternoon dances. The physical activity and sociability helped lift Al's spirits during a very troublesome time in his life. Esther and Al were married two years ago.

By the time I met Mr. Park in 1988, he was a member of seven different dance clubs. He had also removed the billiard table from his basement in order to install a dance floor. When he has people over for a dance, he wheels the decorative fireplace into the laundry room and pushes the sofa parallel to the bar, out of the way.

The evening I came to visit, Mr. Park, Esther, and some friends demonstrated about 30 dances for me, among them the Lambeth Walk, the Varsoviana ("This is kind of a simple one. It gets monotonous after a while!"), the Chestnut Tree Schottische, the French Minuet, and a number of waltzes, including the Spanish Waltz, the Mexican Waltz, and the Veleta.

