

Bug-Bitten Boogies Bounce To Jammin', Slammin' Beat

By TRISH HUETHER

Register Staff Writer

"Shoulder spin aerial," Leon shouted at his wife. He hoisted Colleen over his shoulder and swung her feet-first back to the floor.

They shifted into the St. Louie Shag, not missing a beat to the trombone and wailing sax. Cradling the mike next to his tonsils a slick-haired singer verberated, "They got a lot a crazy women an' I'm gonna get me one."

A jam session formed around Les Davidson, who slid Bonnie White between his legs. Another couple broke into the clapping circle, doing the Flyin' Lindy.

They could have danced all night—jumping and jiving, swinging and diving, the Jitterbug Club of America. Bit by the bug—the jitterbug—the fever keeps them hopping every Sunday night in the Grand Hotel, Anaheim.

Leon Raper, founder of the month-

old club, caught the bug seven years ago. He had never jitterbugged before in his life, but "I went to a dance studio that had a Parents Without Partners dance class and learned," the Fullerton resident said from his table by the dance floor.

When his club met for its first dance this fall, 200 showed up. Now the dances are a weekly event in the Off Broadway West Night Club. Instruction for the novice or the rusty runs from 6-7 p.m. Sundays with open dancing to a swing band from 7-11:30.

People bit by the bug "will drive a thousand miles for a dance," Leon said. "They're crazy; they love it."

Why do they prefer jitterbug over other dance forms? "It's more fun!" Leon said. "See that woman there?" he pointed towards the dance floor. "She's about 68. She was dancing with a man once who was in his 80s who literally died on the dance floor. He

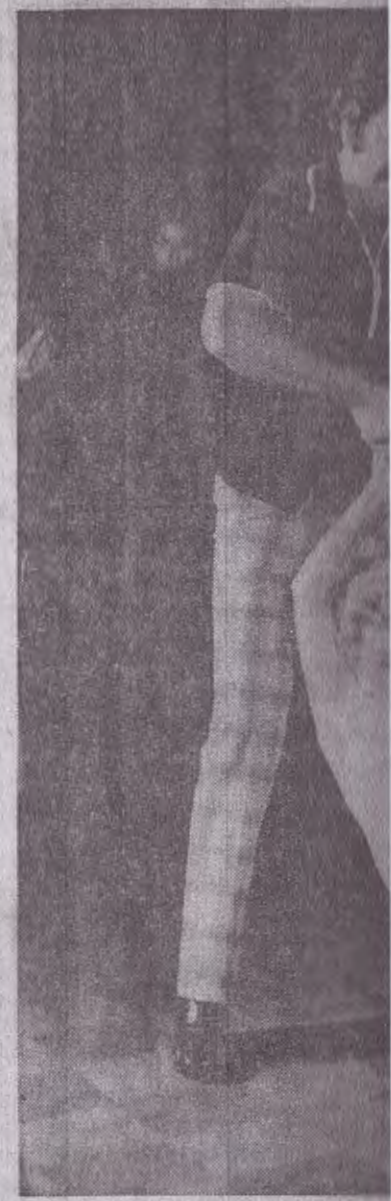
danced jittergug all his life and that's how he died."

Most on the floor that night, though, were between 35 and 50 years old and never seemed to run out of energy.

The band switched from its wailing to a bounce cha cha as he spoke. One couple danced cheek-to-cheek Lawrence-Welk-style, while others began the sophisticated Cha Cha shuffle. "Many people come from dance studios here," Leon said, "or they just come in on their own and want to learn. I can't really tell if the nostalgia thing has contributed to the popularity of the dancing. Maybe so."

"Alright, it's Balboa time," the slick singer announced. The drummer and guitarist flew into a fast beat; while the organist's fingers swept over the keyboard. Couples raced through a million and two steps across the floor, bodies following their sliding feet.

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ERMA BOMBECK

Desperate Prayer Opens



to be stamping out the
min, but they are just
doing St. Louie Shag
kicks. The Jitterbug
Club of America draws
a hopping, bopping
crowd every Sunday
night in the Off Broad-
way West Night Club,
Grand Hotel in Anaheim.

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