

## MA HANEY'S LIFE WAS LIKE A CARTOON

'Writer's Corner'

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It's funny how the simplest of things can cause a barrage of suppressed, bad childhood memories to resurface. For me, it was an episode of the Annoying Orange titled Fruit Loose on the Cartoon Network. The plot was a simple parody of the movie Foot Loose which, when I originally viewed it, had little impact on me other than remind me of attending high school in Baxter so long ago. Like in those times, dancing



was banned in the cartoon. An old prune who was mayor banned it in the produce section. When apples, pears, oranges and lemons tried to take up dancing, she proclaimed it evil and assured everyone that the dancing criminals would be sent to jail.

This situation reminded me of my Nameless grammar school days 50 years ago when President Kennedy urged a physical fitness program in the nation's schools. On the days that we couldn't take recess outside, Mrs. Draper decided square dancing would be a great way to exercise in our little two-room school. I was in the fifth grade and Aunt Zasu in the eighth of the big room. Everything was okay until Ma Haney found out they were teaching dancing in the school. She stormed in one day, quoting the Bible and yelling that dancing was evil. She demanded that this sin against God be stopped because it was placing all the kids on the path to the River of Fire!

Over the next few years, there was no more dancing. However, many of the girls resented the event, especially those who went to the other church and wanted to place blame on me for having the Crazy Ma Haney as a grandmother. I thought it would end when I got out of Nameless and went to high school in Baxter. One of the girls also went there and made sure to let everyone know that I went to the church that banned dancing.

Eventually it died down until graduation drew near. That same girl was among those who decided Baxter needed its first senior prom. There was opposition in the community, with me catching more blame from the other kids. However, reason won out and there was the first senior dance, which has not become a tradition.

After college, I took up with a pagan girl from the Catholic faith. I made the mistake of introducing her to Ma Haney and she bragged about finally getting me to dance. That set the old woman off about the sin of dancing and how my mixed marriage was never going to work. However, we were married at the sinner church and didn't have to worry about a Haney presence at the reception later. There was dancing which my mother complained about for years later. Ironically, the mixed marriage has lasted 35 years until the majority of those from the Haney church, that ended in divorce.

As the years passed, I became disabled due to an inherited condition. Walking is hard enough without thinking about dancing. When my oldest son got married, I was glad there was no dancing. Ironically, my newly widowed mother had to leave early to hit the dance floor at the veterans building. After my dad passed, she and Aunt Boop took up dancing. She said they were just having a little fun and were "Girls Gone Wild."

Tongues back at the old Haney church began to wag. I got a phone call from that same gal I went to grammar school with wanting to know when the old Haney church approved of dancing.

As I viewed the cartoon and learned the old prune mayor condemned dancing because of a contest she lost when she was a young plum, I realized just how much like the cartoon my story was.

I recently learned that Ma Haney went wild in the '30s with an ambition to run off to the big city and become a flapper. She got with child and her feller left her and his responsibilities behind when he went to Michigan.

Her mother said, "Dancing led to your shame!"

The End.

(\*Read more 'Writers Corner' at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>)