Education Support

American Dance

Dancing like a Lady/Gentleman

an editorial opinion by Joyce E. Pennington

Precision Dance has really made some remarkable transitions over the past 80 years and perhaps some accelerated changes over the past 5 to 10 years. Perhaps I am old fashioned and conservative, but some of the new moves I am not fond of and feel that they do not portray the image we should want for young ladies today. Since my "retirement" as a dance team director, I have had the opportunity to attend several football and pep rally performances per week, as well as judging contests around the country. As a bystander in the audience, I am able to pick up on crowd response from parents and students --some favorable, and some not.

Those of us with a dance background perhaps have a more aesthetic appreciation for the human body and can see the beauty in the movement of dance. But as a director, I feel it is imperative that you be the editor of the choreography before it goes to the performance area. Some of the comments from the male audience regarding some of the suggestive steps would have to have been censored before they reached other ears. I have even seen dancers taunted by their peers because of suggestive moves.

With such a wide range of ideas and creative movement, why should it be necessary to encourage negative comments when they can earn applause and respect? We teach our dancers to walk, talk and act with class and grace. Why should we allow or even encourage them to dance like the exact reverse? Nothing is more exciting than to see beautiful smiles on fresh, polished faces performing an exciting and dynamic routine that pleases the audience without the suggestive movements or over-exposing certain body parts.

I encourage dance team directors as well as dance officers to take the time to review each routine and become an active consultant in choreography if you have not already done so. The more you participate, the more you will learn and improve with your team. I am also sure that you will gain a more exciting and respectful response from your audience.