



MAC SHEPARD

NO BATHTUB GIN, THANKS

EVERY GENERATION, like every individual, seems to go through an awkward period of adolescence. And the present one is showing symptoms which are not only ungraceful but a little bit baffling. For they definitely betray a longing for the twenties.

Any reader who was out of short pants or pigtails during the Era of Wonderful Nonsense has probably noticed such cultural straws in the wind as these:

The shingle bob and the cloche hat are but in front in the fashion parade, with the raccoon coat coming up fast on the outside.

An association of dancing masters has warned American youth that if they don't want to be classed as a bunch of squares, they'd better get busy and learn the hula.

Swimmers once more have been tackling the English Channel with an attendant publicity which compares favorably with that given the D-Day invasion. Flagpole sitters have reappeared in the land.

A ukulele manufacturer reports that the demand for his cigar-box guitars is about six times what it was before the war. And the country's juke boxes offer a selection of such vintage

ballads as *That Certain Party*, *Baby Face*, *Has Anybody Seen My Gal?* and *Doodle-Do Do*.

This trend can't be dismissed by calling it commercialism. Maybe styles are dictated arbitrarily. But no nostalgic fifth column has thrust the ukulele into unwilling hands. And no underground conspiracy has driven swimmers, like so many lemmings, into the sea at Cape Gris-Nez. No, it must be something in our national subconscious that's responsible.

But why? Postwar America of 1922 and 1949 is hardly the same country. The twenties were a time of prohibition, isolationism, materialism, false security and general phoniness. Then the younger generation's growing pains took such painful forms as the Charleston, Valentino sideburns, and the boop-boop-a-doop school of *bel canto*. Ten years later, in the grim reality of a depression, the youngsters' mood changed, and a rather smart-aleck Bolshevism became the style.

Somehow, we've always doubted that that parlor Marxism was any more alarming or dangerous than the wearing of braid-trimmed, bell-bottom trousers had been in the twenties.

But America's feeling about Communism

has changed a lot in the meantime—and with good reason—even if America's adolescents haven't. Vestiges of left-wing "liberalism" are still found among the young, but pink is no longer a fashionable political color.

Maybe that explains this yen for the superficial trappings of the twenties. But whatever the reason, we can't feel too alarmed about it. Today's America is neither self-deluded nor phony. The ukulele isn't going to replace television, and the hula won't slow down the tempo of the supersonic present. They're probably just indications that the present crop of teen-agers and college-agers is growing up a little bit happier and more relaxed than the depression kids were.

Progress in the Arts

READERS OF *What Gives in Rasslin'*, which appears in this issue, will be pleased to know of an important development in this peculiarly American art form which has taken place since the article was written. It is the appearance of a new kind of wrestling mat cover that can scarcely fail to add physical and dramatic scope to the muscle men's performance.

The cover is made of flexible plastic sheeting. Its great virtue is that while it offers perfect traction for rubber soles, clothing and skin can slide over it freely and without injury. Even the devotee who has never been closer to a wrestler than a television screen will appreciate the new vistas which this revolutionary piece of equipment opens up.

First of all, it will minimize the risk of painful bruises which until now has been present in even so stylized and well-rehearsed an art. It will also cut down on the physical exertion demanded of the performers.

No longer will a grunting gladiator find it necessary to toss his opponent out of the ring with an airplane spin. He will only need to rise to his rubber-soled feet at the climactic moment and slide his partner into the customers' laps, with no more trouble than a bowler goes through sending his ball down the alley.

Other variations will probably occur to the resourceful athletes. We shan't be surprised if, within a year or two, commercial wrestling takes on the characteristics of hockey, bowling, football, curling, and the famous performance of Sliding Billy Watson and his Beef Trust.

Anthracite d'Amour

AN OIL REFINING COMPANY reports that it is working on a scheme to anoint the family coal supply with fragrant oils. This would not only lay the dust but also perfume the fuel with the odor of, say violets or pine or tuberose or maybe even bourbon whisky.

The way we figure it, this elaborate refinement can only have been planned for the benefit of wayward husbands.

We can hear them now: "Drinking? Of course not. Strange perfume? Nonsense, my dear. I've just come up from throwing a couple of shovels of coal on the fire."

Swoop

FEDERAL AGENTS recently trapped some New Jersey bootleggers with the aid of a helicopter. Any day now we expect to see the neighborhood kids playing helicops and robbers.

Collier's for October 29, 1949



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