

Dancing in My Underwear

The Soundtrack of My Life

By Mike Morsch

Copyright© 2012 Mike Morsch

Dancing in My Underwear

*With love for Judy, Kiley, Lexi, Kaitie and
Kevin. And for Mom and Dad. Thanks for
introducing me to some great music.*

**Published by
The Educational Publisher
www.EduPublisher.com**

ISBN: 978-1-62249-005-9

Contents

Foreword

By Frank D. Quattrone

1

Chapters:

The Association

Larry Ramos

Dancing in my underwear

3

The Monkees

Micky Dolenz

The freakiest cool "Purple Haze"

9

The Lawrence Welk Show

Ken Delo

The secret family chip dip

17

Olivia Newton-John

Girls are for more than pelting with apples

25

Cheech and Chong

Tommy Chong

The Eighth-Grade Stupid Shit Hall of Fame

33

Dancing in My Underwear

The Doobie Brothers

Tom Johnston

Rush the stage and risk breaking a hip?

41

America

Dewey Bunnell

Wardrobe malfunction: Right guy, right spot, right time

45

Three Dog Night

Chuck Negron

Elvis sideburns and a puka shell necklace

51

The Beach Boys

Mike Love

Washing one's hair in a toilet with Comet in the middle of Nowhere, Minnesota

55

Hawaii Five-O

Al Harrington

Learning the proper way to stretch a single into a double

61

KISS

Paul Stanley

Pinball wizard in a Mark Twain town

71

The Beach Boys

Bruce Johnston

Face down in the fields of dreams

79

Roy Clark

Grinnin' with the ole picker and grinner

85

The Boston Pops

Keith Lockhart

They sound just like the movie

93

The Beach Boys

Brian Wilson

Little one who made my heart come all undone

101

The Bellamy Brothers

Howard Bellamy

I could be perquaded

127

The Beach Boys

Al Jardine

The right shirt at the wrong time

135

Law & Order

Jill Hennessy

I didn't know she could sing

143

Barry Manilow

I right the wrongs, I right the wrongs

151

A Bronx Tale

Chazz Palminteri

How lucky can one guy be?

159

Hall & Oates

Daryl Hall

The smile that lives forever

167

Wynonna Judd

I'm smelling good for you and not her

173

The Beach Boys

Jeffrey Foskett

*McGuinn and McGuire couldn't get no higher . . .
and neither could I*

179

Hall & Oates

John Oates

Along with Yosemite Sam, the go-to guy for lip hair

187

Dan May

My album debut . . . sort of

193

The Lovin' Spoonful

Joe Butler

I believe in backstage magic

199

The Four Seasons

Bob Gaudio

Hey, get your hind end out of my ear, pal!

203

Epilogue

Elton John

I guess that's why they call it the blues

211

Acknowledgements

219

Dancing in My Underwear

Foreword

By Frank D. Quattrone

From the long, wide Leeway at Pekin (Illinois) Community High, the social epicenter of the teeming school, where many teenage plots were hatched, to the outfield grass at Iowa State University, where a baseball career came undone, from Mrs. Betty Bower’s inspiring journalism class at Pekin High School to the bustling newsroom of the Cardinal Free Press in Carpentersville, Illinois, you’re about to enter a terrain both alien and familiar.

In this joyous, reflective and sometimes flat-out funny memoir, longtime journalist and newspaper editor Mike Morsch presents us with the soundtrack of his life. And music — from the preternaturally sweet harmonies of the Beach Boys’ “The Little Girl I Once Knew” to the social criticism of singer-songwriter Dan May’s ironic “Paradise” — remains at the core of Mike’s story.

You’ll recognize the familiar teenage angst suffered by this good-natured, self-effacing lunk, even as you learn about growing up in the Sixties in the small-town simplicity of the Midwest. Along the way you’ll come to enjoy the innocent adventures of Midwestern schoolboys, share in the home runs and strikeouts our young hero experienced on the baseball field (as well as his gaffes playing the field) and gain some insight into the once-golden years of the newspaper game.

But through it all, the turntable never stops spinning, the jukebox continues to jump and the songs never stop coming. Mike may have begun his distinguished career as a music lover by dancing in his underwear to the beats of the Beatles, Elvis and the Beach Boys in his parents’ modest home, but now — as the executive editor of Montgomery Media, a group of multi-award-winning community online and print publications in Montgomery

Dancing in My Underwear

County, Pennsylvania (he's earned quite a few of them himself!) — Mike has finally gotten the opportunity he never thought possible in his youth.

As a frequent contributor to Ticket, the weekly arts-and-entertainment section of Montgomery Media, Mike has gotten to interview, meet and trade quips [or stories] with some of the finest musical performers of this or any other era.

Despite the preponderance of rock and pop artists — think Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys, Micky Dolenz of the Monkees, Tom Johnston of the Doobie Brothers, Daryl Hall and John Oates, and Chuck Negron of Three Dog Night — you'll also be with Mike as he interviews stalwarts in country (Wynonna and Roy Clark), classical (Keith Lockhart), and your grandparents' music (Ken Delo of *The Lawrence Welk Show*).

And you'll find music connections in the most unexpected sources and fields of interest — like art (KISS frontman Paul Stanley), comedy (Tommy Chong from Cheech & Chong), TV (*Law & Order*'s Jill Hennessy) and theater (*A Bronx Tale*'s Chazz Palminteri).

At the heart of it all, Mike shares with you some of the insights he's gleaned from interviews with these paragons of modern music. You'll hear it in their own voices. Meanwhile, you'll come to know a most engaging character in his own right — a man who grows before your eyes from a certified member of “The Eighth-Grade Stupid Shit Hall of Fame” to a loving father and a highly respected member of his profession.

So sit back, fire up the turntable or click on your iPod and let Mike take you on an unforgettable journey through the soundtrack of his life.

The Association

Larry Ramos

Dancing in my underwear

My folks, Ed and Ann Morsch, had quite a record collection when I was a kid in the 1960s. Much of that music would now be considered hip for its time — the Beatles, the Beach Boys and Elvis — the biggest popular music stars of that era. Mostly, though, my folks favored music that featured harmonies.

I think it was because they shared a fondness for the local barbershop chorus in our town. They had a friend, Jim, who was one of the singers and they often attended the local concerts. The local guys had cut a couple of albums – I guess they were that good – and it was at those concerts where my folks purchased those barbershop albums.

Around the age of 4, I discovered my parents’ record collection, which consisted of both albums and 45s, the smaller vinyl disks that had one song on each side of the record. There are actually photographs of the 4-year-old me dancing in my underwear next to that gray record player, eyes closed and completely oblivious to my parents taking pictures of what they considered was cute behavior by their eldest child.

Fortunately, the older I got, the more prone I was to wearing pants while dancing. But that took nothing away from the enthusiasm I’ve had for music along life’s journey, pants or no pants.

The first 45 record I can recall playing on the small, gray record player that we had was “The Little Girl I Once Knew” by the Beach Boys. I was immediately attracted to the harmonies of brothers Brian, Dennis and Carl Wilson, their cousin Mike Love and high school friend Al Jardine. It would be the beginning of a lifetime of love for that sound and those lyrics and

Dancing in My Underwear

there was no way at such a young age I could have known how important the Beach Boys would be throughout my life.

In what seems odd now, though, there were no Beach Boys albums in the collection that I can recall. So the one album I gravitated toward because of that attraction to the harmonies was “Insight Out” by the Association. It featured two wonderful songs and big hits — “Windy,” which reached No. 1 in 1967 and “Never My Love,” which climbed to No. 2 that same year.

Not only was I attracted to the music, but also the album cover, which featured single-, double-, triple- and quadruple-exposed individual portraits of the band’s members. Released in 1967, it was the first album by the group that featured Larry Ramos, a guitarist and vocalist who had replaced lead guitarist Jules Alexander.

I absolutely wore that album out. And more than 40 years later, I got to talk with Larry Ramos.

In July of 2011, three original members of the Association – Ramos, Russ Giguere and Jim Yester – joined the 2011 version of the “Happy Together Tour” for a July 13 show at the Keswick Theatre in Glenside, Pa.

Other ’60s musical icons on the bill included the Turtles, featuring Flo and Eddie; the Grass Roots; Mark Lindsay, former lead singer for Paul Revere & the Raiders; and the Buckingham.

“Here we are, grandfathers, but we’re still having a great time, we’re still kids,” said Ramos in a telephone interview from his home in Idaho. “It’s kinda far out. Jules [Jules Alexander, another original member of group that Ramos had replaced in the late 1960s, returned and then left again and no longer tours with the group] used to say, ‘You know, this is a lot more fun as adults.’ And he was absolutely right.”

Dancing in My Underwear

Although the Association had broken up and re-formed several times with different lineups over the past 40 years, this wasn't its first time on the Happy Together Tour. The band appeared in the 1984 Happy Together Tour, which also featured The Turtles, among others.

“We were very careful back then with the music we selected because we wanted the music to endure,” said Ramos of the band's early years. “We didn't care about where the music came from as long as it was good.

“I think that's one of the reasons why we're still around. We were so careful in selecting the material that we recorded and the quality of the material that we recorded. ‘Never My Love’ is a classic. I love that song and I loved it the first time I ever heard it,” said Ramos.

Still, Ramos said he and the other members enjoy performing more now than they did in the group's heyday.

“In the '60s, it was work, man. We were cranking out a couple of hundred days a year on the road,” said Ramos. “Now, when we sing our love songs, the boomers are kids again. They hold each other's hands and sing along. It's very, very touching.

“The music is the whole thing. Certain things in music trigger those emotions. I'm so happy that our music has sustained the ability to do that and has become part of the fabric of American music,” he said.

Ramos, who has been performing since the age of 5, described himself as “a Filipino kid from West Kauai, Hawaii.” As a youngster who played the ukulele, he appeared in the 1950 film “Pagan Love Song,” starring Esther Williams, Howard Keel and Rita Moreno. He eventually went on to perform with the New Christy Minstrels before joining the Association.

Dancing in My Underwear

And he's grateful to have been doing what he loves for as long as he's been doing it.

"I honestly didn't think my career would be this long," he said. "I only planned my life until I was 65. I'm a little past that now and I don't know what the heck I'm doing. I'm just enjoying it now. Being able to be in this business at this age, it's just terrific.

"Our music affected people in a way that's stayed with them all these years. That's probably the biggest reward that any recording artist or any entertainer can have."

I'm one of those people. The music of the Association has stayed with me all these years.

On the night of the concert, I was very excited. So many years had passed since I was a 4-year-old dancing in my underwear to the music of the Association on my small, gray record player.

The copy of "Insight Out" that my folks had was long gone, but I found another original copy of the album at a record store in Chestnut Hill, Pa., a few weeks before the show. I was hoping to get a chance to meet the Association guys and have them sign my album.

Fortunately, I got to do just that. But it almost didn't happen.

I shared the Happy Together concert with my oldest daughter Kiley, which was lucky for me. She was riding shotgun during the autograph-getting portion after the show. She has seen me collect autographs her whole life and knows that I oftentimes get star-struck when in the presence of the artists. That experience makes her a perfect second in those situations, kind of a Vice President in Charge of Making Sure That Dad Doesn't Act Like a Babbling Teenager and Forget to Get the Autograph.

Dancing in My Underwear

I had already secured the signatures of Giguere and Yester on the album cover when Ramos came out in front of the stage for the meet-and-greet. I was so excited to meet him that I forgot to ask him to sign the album. Like Ramos, I'm getting older, too, I guess.

"Dad, the album!" said Kiley, saving the day. Ramos signed the album cover, completing the Association autograph trifecta for me that evening.

My daughter, whose big-deal music group is N'SYNC, was familiar with only a few of the songs from the Happy Together show, which also included performances of classic songs like "Kind of a Drag" by the Buckingham; "Midnight Confessions" by the Grass Roots; "Kicks" by Mark Lindsay of Paul Revere and the Raiders; and "Happy Together" by the Turtles.

In addition to meeting the guys from the Association, we also got to meet Carl Giammarese of the Buckingham and Howard Kaylan of the Turtles and get their signatures.

When I introduced Kaylan to my daughter, he said, "You should thank your father for introducing you to good music."

With all due respect to N'SYNC, Kaylan is right. There was some great, great music in the 1960s. And Kiley and I enjoyed seeing all those talented musicians whose songs have stayed with me all these years.

You might say we were happy together.

The Monkees

Micky Dolenz

The freakiest cool “Purple Haze”

As the superintendent of Rankin Grade School, a little country school that sat between Pekin and South Pekin, Illinois with a total of about 120 students in grades kindergarten through eighth grade, my dad always seemed to want to do nice things for his students, especially the eighth-graders.

The eighth-graders always got to take a big field trip at the end of their last year at Rankin, most often to Six Flags south of St. Louis, which ended up being about a four-hour bus ride. It must have been a difficult trip with a bunch of young teenagers, mostly because those trips were made on the yellow school buses, not the fancy chartered buses of today, complete with restroom facilities.

I can remember as a little kid always wanting to go on that trip with my folks, hoping that time would hurry up and make me an eighth-grader. My parents often got home very late in the evening from that trip, and try as I might, I was never able to stay awake long enough to see what souvenir they would bring home for me.

One year, I got a boat oar – not a full-sized oar but a sawed-off souvenir one about half the size of a real oar – with the Six Flags logo on it. It was an odd-gift for an 8-year-old, considering the fact that we didn’t own a boat and didn’t live particularly close to any body of water that might comfortably accommodate a boat.

But in addition to the annual field trip, the 1968 eighth-grade class of Rankin Grade School got an extra-special gift from my folks as it neared graduation: a party in the basement of my parents’ home.

Dancing in My Underwear

My dad, a stern disciplinarian at school that was probably typical of school administrators in the 1960s – it occurred to me later that the boat oar he brought home from Six Flags was about the perfect size for paddling unruly students – was in truth a kindhearted gentleman who always had the students’ best interests in his heart, even though it could sometimes be a little sideways.

Hosting a party in his basement was one of those times, mostly because it was not a finished basement. Oh, our family used it like it was a finished basement – there were plenty of kids’ toys strewn about, some furniture and a rug down there, along with a working fireplace. But there was no “family room” feel about it. The laundry area was just at the bottom of the steps and to the left, but it was a dark and damp area of uncarpeted cement floors and cinder block walls. In fact, there was an area toward the back of the basement that my folks used as a storage area that scared the beejeezus out of me. It was dark and damp and there wasn’t a spider in the neighborhood that hadn’t spun a web back there.

When it rained a lot, the water would virtually come through some of the compromised areas of the cinder blocks and flood the cement floor. A countless number of times my dad would have to get down there and spend hours vacuuming up the water. I assume that’s why the basement was never finished – it leaked like a sieve.

But hey, it seemed like an OK location for an eighth-grade party to my dad. I don’t recall much about that party – it’s likely I wasn’t invited downstairs for much of the festivities – but I do recall that a few of the eighth-grade boys had formed a garage band and they were the featured entertainment for the evening. Lucky for them and their amplifiers that it didn’t rain that evening and they weren’t standing in two inches of water with those electric guitars.

A kid by the name of Greg Clemons was the lead singer for that band and I was quite impressed with his version of the Monkees' hit tune "Last Train to Clarksville," which was the group's debut single and hit No. 1 on the Billboard charts in 1966. I was a big fan of the Monkees then, and I never missed their Saturday-morning television show and the antics and music of Micky Dolenz, Davy Jones, Peter Tork and Michael Naismith.

And in September of 2011, I got to talk with Micky Dolenz.

The first clue Dolenz got that the Monkees were a huge success could just have easily been a fire drill.

The Monkees – formed as a musical acting quartet in 1966 that served as America's answer to the Beatles — had been sequestered for months in the studio, engulfed in rehearsing, filming and recording.

In essence, they had no idea of the public reaction to "The Monkees" television show because they hadn't yet been out in public to experience it.

Just before Christmas of 1966, the band members got a week off. Dolenz decided to do a little Christmas shopping at his local mall in Los Angeles, where he grew up, with plans to head up to San Jose, California, after that to see his family for the holidays.

"I get out of my car and I have my list and I go through the big glass doors of the mall and all of a sudden I hear screaming and people are running toward me," said Dolenz in a telephone interview from Los Angeles. "And I thought it was a fire. So I turned around and I opened the glass doors and I go, 'This way! This way! Don't panic! Calm down! Walk slowly this way!'

"All of a sudden I realized there was no fire; it's all these people — mostly kids — running at me. So I ran back and got in my car and I was kind of pissed because I couldn't do my Christmas shopping. That was the first inkling I had of the success of "The Monkees,'" he said.

Dancing in My Underwear

And 45 years later, Dolenz is still a success. I talked to him for a preview story about a solo gig he had planned at the 360 Club at the Parx Casino in Bensalem, Pennsylvania.

Dolenz — who along with Jones and Tork had been busy with a successful 45th anniversary tour for the Monkees before it was abruptly stopped a month earlier — had sprinkled a few solo gigs into his summer and early fall schedule.

There was no official reason given at the time for the stoppage of the tour, which began in England in May 2011, reached the U.S. in June and had its plug pulled in early August.

Although he wouldn't comment further, Dolenz did say that the band was having fun during the tour.

“The shows were really great, some of the best we've ever done. It was very gratifying,” he said.

The Monkees had a number of hits in the late 1960s, including “Last Train to Clarksville” (the group's first No. 1 in 1966); “I'm a Believer” (No. 1 in 1966); “Daydream Believer” (No. 1 in 1967); and “Pleasant Valley Sunday” (No. 3 in 1967). The group has reunited off and on over the years as a trio, mostly without the participation of Nesmith.

Dolenz, then 66, has had a career that not only includes being a musician, but also a stage actor, television director and radio personality. But there has always been the music.

“The Monkees' was a television show, so we had little or no control over what was being recorded. I didn't have a big problem with it at the time in the early days because I'd take it as an assignment, more or less,” said Dolenz, who by the time “The Monkees” gig rolled around had already

starred in the television series “Circus Boy” in 1956.

“But you look at the songwriters who wrote those songs [for the Monkees] and it’s unbelievable; it’s a Who’s Who of songwriting: Tommy Boyce and Bobby Hart, Neil Diamond, Carole King, Neil Sedaka, Harry Nilsson, Paul Williams . . . just amazing songwriters,” he said.

In his solo act, Dolenz has always tried to make sure to give the fans what they came to hear — all those hits from the Monkees. He also said he’s gotten better over the years at relating to his audience.

“In the early days, we couldn’t relate to an audience because they were all just screaming,” said Dolenz. “In the early days of my solo show, I would just stand there with a guitar and play and sing. But then I started doing a lot of musical theater and I got a lot better at being comfortable without an instrument in my hands.”

Previously published reviews at the time indicated that Dolenz’s voice remained strong, and he agrees.

“Most of that I attribute to the training that I’ve been doing for musical theater,” said Dolenz, whose most recent stage work was a successful run of starring in “Hairspray” in London. “I warm up and train properly and keep my voice in shape.”

And like most artists, Dolenz said he doesn’t like the travel, but he still gets a kick out of performing.

“Like I tell people, they pay me to travel . . . I sing for free. I love doing these shows,” he said.

Dolenz’s show in September 2011 at the Parx Casino was scheduled for 5 p.m. on a Sunday, a somewhat odd day and start time for a concert by a big

Dancing in My Underwear

star. But let me tell you about 5 p.m. Sunday concerts: They are, quite simply . . . beautiful. Not only does the early evening start time fall after my Sunday afternoon nap, but I was home in time to have dinner with my family and well ahead of the Phillies game, which had an 8 p.m. start time that evening on ESPN.

And what else can one say about Micky Dolenz that hasn't already been said? It was the music that kept me coming back to that show as a kid, and it's the music that keeps me coming back more than 40 years later.

I had the pleasure of shaking hands with Dolenz at the meet-and-greet before the performance Sunday evening. It's worth noting that he wears really cool hats because I'd like to wear really cool hats, too. Unfortunately, I am unable to get clearance from the tower on that. When I told The Blonde Accountant that Dolenz was wearing a cool hat and that I should get one, too, she informed me that I wasn't Micky Dolenz and that I didn't have a resume filled with hit songs.

I was aware of that.

Although he'll always be remembered as one of the Monkees, Dolenz is quite an accomplished singer and musician as well as a television and theater actor and director, Saturday-morning cartoon voiceover performer and radio personality.

The history of the Monkees is well documented, but I sometimes learn a thing or two during the between-song banter that a performer has with the audience. In this instance, most of the new information for me came from the non-Monkees stories.

During the Parx show, Dolenz shared an anecdote about the great Jimi Hendrix. Because of Hendrix's performance at the 1967 Monterey Pop Festival, Dolenz suggested to Monkees' management that Hendrix open for

the group on its first American tour. Hendrix eventually did a few gigs with the Monkees.

Dolenz then performed his version of Hendrix's song "Purple Haze," which for me qualified as the freakiest cool moment of the show.

Another story that I enjoyed was Dolenz telling about the time he traveled to London and got to attend a recording session that the Beatles were having at the time. It was in the late 1960s and John, Paul, George and Ringo were working on their "Abbey Road" album. One of the tracks they played for Dolenz that day was "Oh! Darling," and Micky's rendition of the song followed his telling of that story.

And Dolenz's version of Chuck Berry's "Johnny B. Goode" was absolutely outstanding, mostly because he's been doing it for quite some time. In fact, Dolenz revealed that it's the song he sang during his audition for the Monkees, the one that essentially got him the job.

Of course, Dolenz was the lead singer on some of those great Monkees' hits like "Last Train to Clarksville," "I'm a Believer" and "Steppin' Stone," and all of those were included in the Sunday solo show, which also featured Dolenz's sister — Coco Dolenz — singing backup, which she does for his solo appearances.

Shifting into concert reviewer mode for a moment, I must say that Dolenz has still got some great pipes and maintains that theatrical presentation to his audiences. He offered the standing room-only crowd — one of the biggest if not the biggest for a show at Parx's 360 Club — a lot of energy along with a lot of memories.

Everybody seemed to go away happy, including me. It was a great show by a great performer and pop culture icon. Sure, the crowd was older — the Monkees' heyday was in the late 1960s — but I'm guessing I'm not the only

Dancing in My Underwear

one who was pleased with a 5 p.m. Sunday concert. We may not be able to dance the night away, but we old folks have got that toe-tapping thing down better than any other age group.

In fact, in this instance, you might say it was another Pleasant Valley Sunday.