

## Straight Dance by Jan Hackett

Sometimes called the "Southern Traditional" and often referred to as the "Old man's" dance the Straight Dance finds its roots in the warrior societies of the Hethuska. The outfit is comprised of many pieces and care must be taken to coordinate the various parts. The dance clothes combined with the graceful and stately movements of the dancers come together to create a stunning dance style.

Let us discuss these items as a dancer gets ready to enter the arena. The first item put on by most dancers is a pair of leggings. You will find two distinct styles of leggings, the first style is made of trade cloth with elaborate ribbon work on the inside of the flaps. The ribbon work is exposed by holding the flap open with the garters and bells that are worn just below the knee. This style of leggings are found commonly among the Osage, Fox and the Ponca. The other style of leggings are typically made of white or natural leather and have a tab extending downward from just above the knee. The inside of the tab should be covered with trade cloth and edge beading finishes the tabs nicely. This style of leggings is typical of the Kiowa and Comanche.

The next item will be the trailer and apron set, these are generally made from trade cloth, although you will sometimes find other types of materials being used. When making your apron and trailer keep in mind that the color red is reserved for the oldest son. The better apron and trailer sets will have elaborate Osage style ribbon work. If you wear trade cloth leggings the ribbon work should coordinate with the apron and trailer set.



The next item to be put on is the ribbon shirt, the colors and patterns used in this traditional shirt are endless. The one rule is that the ribbon on the shirt matches the color of the neckerchief and scarf set.

The next item to be put on is the bandoliers, there are two of them one worn over each shoulder. The items used in the construction of bandoliers varies greatly, you will find bone, horn, pony beads, old shell casings, brass beads, silver beads and more. Usually attached to the bandoliers at the shoulder blades is the scarf "set" (note some dancers attach them directly to the ribbon shirt) the important thing to remember here is that the color matches the ribbon on the shirt and neckerchief. The scarves will sometimes have conchos, feathers, plumes or other adornments attached to them. Some dancers will have a ball of sweetgrass tied in the center of the scarves and then attached to the shirt or bandoliers. You must be cautious of this as some will say this is a peyote sign, while others say it is to keep the dance clothes fresh.

The next item to put on is the choker, the materials used in its construction should match the materials used in the bandoliers. There is generally four rows in the choker and a conch shell in the center. Next we add the drag or otter strip, it attaches around the neck and hangs down the back touching the floor. Probably the most common is a full otter skin or a simulated otter strip mounted to broad cloth and decorated with beading, feathers, mirrors, rosettes and more. The other common drop/drag is conchos or silver hair plates mounted to a piece of leather. The ends of the drag or otter will sometimes be adorned with horse hair and peyote beading. Once the drag and choker are in place it is time for your neckerchief and slide. The slide is typically made of German silver and the color of the neckerchief is the same as the ribbon on the shirt and scarves.

