



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Famous People

My son, Tim, says everyone in America over the age of 18 surely knows at least one famous person. By famous, he means someone who is known to people he doesn't know in return.

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The president is famous.

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So is his brother, Billy.

John Wayne was famous, but by Tim's definition it doesn't count if you know dead people, for then it can't be verified. That rules out the fact I once shook hands with Louis Armstrong and shared a cup of coffee with Golda Mier.

Henry Kissinger is famous. I saw him sitting with his tall wife in the Ionosphere Lounge in the Atlanta Airport last year. That doesn't count, either. You have to know a famous person, not just see him in the airport.

So I started trying to list the famous people I know — and who know me.

I know my congressman, Bill Nelson. But Bill doesn't fit the description of famous. To be famous, according to Tim, you have to be known by persons who don't know you in return. So, Bill's not famous because he knows everyone.

The only other man I've ever met like him is Billy Graham. Put them in a room full of people and when they leave they'll call everyone by name. So, Bill may be remarkable, but he's disqualified as famous.

I guess Bill Wodtke is famous. Everyone knows county commissioners. But the criterion is you have to know a famous person — and in turn be known by them. I got on the plane the other night in Atlanta and sat beside Bill all the way to Melbourne — and he never recognized me. Actually, it was more fun that way for he and the genuinely non-famous fellow he was sitting with talked about everybody in Vero Beach — and I got to listen in. After we landed I poked Bill in the ribs and said, "Hey, remember me?" He seemed to recall we had gone to school together and that I had once gotten thrown out of his daddy's department store for going in to buy a pair of shoes with a big, green frog in my old shoe to scare the saleslady. (Wow! Was that fun!) But since he didn't recognize me right away, I'll have to scratch him off my list of famous persons I know — despite the fact he's married to a

mighty fine woman.

That narrows my list of famous persons I know to one — John Schumann, the shuffle-on-down-to-Buffalo editor of this newspaper who spends his free time designing costumes for newspaper columnists. Ordinarily, newspaper editors are not famous. They choose to sit under dangling light blubs at great desks, with green eyeshades pulled over bushy eyebrows, cackling gleefully as they make wicked slash strokes with their blue pencils. However, due to his terpsichorean talents, editor Schumann meets all the requirements for being famous. His feeble attempt in last week's paper to make me look ridiculous by dressing me up in that ballerena costume was an obvious diversionary tactic designed to pull attention away from his fame as a dancer. Fame, which true to its fickle nature, is limited to his escapades in the dance studio 29 years ago when we were college students together.

Still, he qualifies. And it's nice to know at least one famous person. Everyone should.