



# Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

## May I Have This Dance?

I doubt if he remembers, and even if he does he would probably deny it, but Jim Thompson and I once took dance lessons at the Arthur Murray studio in Macon, Ga.

It was our freshman year at Mercer University, and Jim, now one of Vero's best-loved citizens, had seen the "come on" ad in the newspaper. "Free dance lesson at Arthur Murray studio. Bring this coupon with you."

In fact, now that I think about it, our other roommate, one-day-to-become-editor-of-this-newspaper John Schumann, was also in on the deal.

He will probably deny it, also.

The gimmick was once you got the feeling of gliding gracefully over the dance floor you'd hopefully buy the entire \$139 package which took you all the way from waltz to rumba.

If my memory is not playing tricks on me, later-to-be-editor Schumann was the only one of the terrible trio who could follow those little white footprints painted on the studio floor. My problem was all those people gawking at us through the plate glass window — watching as I stepped all over the feet of a woman twice my age who kept saying, "Come on, kid, swing it."

Jim's problem was he just wasn't built to rumba — much less jitterbug.

Up until that time my dancing had been limited to a sort of leaning in motion that we did on Saturday night at the community center in Pocahontas Park as the juke box played songs like "Peg 'O My Heart." (Ah, I love it!) Now suddenly we were — the three of us — in the Arthur Murray Studio. Perhaps it was the wickedness of being in the arms of a woman with long, long eyelashes that excited us that morning. Maybe it was the promise we could impress girls with our suave dancing technique. Whatever, it was the beginning of a life-long desire to do things gracefully. A beginning, unfortunately, which has never really gotten past that first desire.

Xavier Cugat had just come out with something called the "Cha Cha Cha." To do it you had to do something with your rump — something that resembles what a horse does up against a pine tree when his tail itches. And I couldn't do it. Neither could Jim, despite the fact he could dunk a basketball and do that little thing on a pitcher's mound for the Mercer Bears which

made the ball curve right across the outside corner of the plate. Only John Schumann, dear reader, was able to perform — doing everything from the slink to the hump to the cha cha cha. Whether he signed up for the full \$139 course I do not remember. But I still remember him in the arms of that aging instructor with the thick makeup and the long, long eyelashes, putting his feet on those white footprints, as all those cotton farmers stood outside on the street, peering through the plate glass windows, gawking.

There is talk, I understand, of reviving the big band era. Anything would be welcome relief to the blare of disco and the thump of rock. But as I take heart that there are perfectly splendid people who don't play tennis or golf (despite the inuendo that you're not "in" unless you at least belong to the club), so I am heartened that there are two equally normal people who never will be good at social dancing: Jim Thompson and me.

As for Mr. Smooth, the editor of this paper, well, with the current emphasis on recycling old things, you never can tell. In fact, there is a rumor that hidden in the composing room closet is a big cardboard box — filled with little white footprints.