



Perspective

By JIM THOMPSON

For JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Of Mice And Men (And Jamie)

As you regular readers of Jamie Buckingham's weekly column know, our friend Jamie is on a trip with a group of men following Moses' footsteps on his journey as he led the children of Israel out of Egypt. No doubt by this time, Jamie has the whole group hopelessly confused and totally lost. We may never hear from Jamie or his group again.

John Schumann Jr., the editor of this mullet wrapper, graciously offered me the opportunity of filling Jamie's column for one of the four weeks that this space will not be occupied by Jamie's ramblings. I accepted with fear and trepidation because one of the many things that I am not is a writer.

At first, I had intended to decline the offer, but then I thought about all the unkind things Jamie has written about me and my friends and thought it only fair that I have an opportunity to respond in kind to some of the things that he has said and done in the past.

Specifically, Jamie has been extremely unkind to that grand individual, John J. Schumann Jr. I really can't understand Jamie's attitude toward me and John since we have allegedly been friends for many, many years.

In fact, we all entered the first grade together in what used to be the Vero Beach Elementary School, and we were graduated together from what used to be the Vero Beach High School. I think even Jamie would admit that those were good years.

After graduation, we entered Mercer University in Macon, Ga., together, and the university made the gross error of allowing us to room together in Old Sherwood Hall. Sherwood Hall and Mercer University will never be the same again. John stayed with us only

through the first year and then moved out for greener pastures, but Jamie and I roomed together for three more years until we were graduated in 1954.

If the years at Vero Beach High School were good, the years at Mercer University were probably the grandest and most glorious years of our lives. I am sure Jamie will remember the gunpowder bomb we made in sophomore chemistry. We set it off in the middle of the ROTC parade field late one night. There wasn't any noise but there was one whale of a concussion.

Chemistry class was also the source that furnished the glassware, stoppers, glass tubes and rubber hoses that allowed us to construct what was undoubtedly the most elaborate turkish water pipe ever built. That was one short period of time that we both smoked (but only the water pipe). It was truly a work of art. People came from all over the campus to see our nicotine nightmare.

Later on, when Jamie and I moved to Shorter Hall and to the fraternity wing of the dormitory, we had other people to assist us in our way-out endeavors. It was in Shorter Hall that we took three or four dozen Florida limes and the fraternity punch bowl and concocted what was probably the best Florida lime wine ever made. Someway we managed to get some sugar and yeast from the dining hall, mixed everything together in the punch bowl, heated it over the radiator and fermented it in the dark recesses of the closet.

After about three weeks, we tried it out on one of our fraternity brothers. Neither Jamie nor I ever had the courage to try it ourselves, but one of our friends said it was the best he had ever tasted, and his actions seemed to indicate that. We

were fortunate that the state of Georgia revenue agents didn't stop by the dormitory, because we would have been arrested as bootleggers.

It was also in Shorter Hall that Jamie and I got permission from university officials to paint our room. As Mercer didn't have enough people or time to paint it, and couldn't furnish the paint, they told us that if we would buy the paint we could paint the room. That was our senior year and, when we left, Shorter Hall, Room 220, was painted a deep, dark green (floor, walls and ceiling) and all the furniture was painted the same color but trimmed in a bright garish purple. We were years ahead of our time. All we needed was strobe lights and we would have been right at home today.

I started out to take Jamie Buckingham to task for some of the unkind things he has said about me and John in the past, but now reminiscing about the days we lived as we grew up together, I really can't do that. In my recent unsuccessful foray into the political arena, Jamie planned to use one column as a personal political endorsement of me, and wrote one of the finest pieces that he has ever produced, but John Schumann Jr. (being the fair, impartial editor that he truly is) didn't use it. I am proud that John didn't because it would have violated Press-Journal policy, but the column that Jamie wrote is one of my most cherished possessions.

These have been some rather rambling reminiscences about Jamie Buckingham. I know that his readers, like me, will be glad when he returns. I miss his column and I miss seeing him on a daily basis. As I have said before, although I am an only child, Jamie Buckingham is truly my brother.