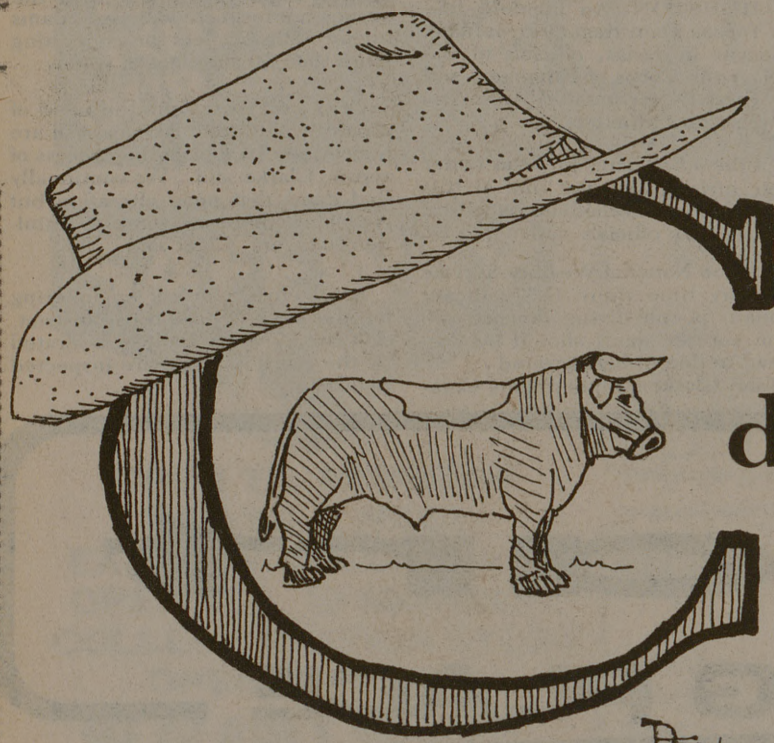


focus



Country dancing, dressing — Aggie style

By MARY ALICE WOODHAMS
Battalion Managing Editor

*'I work at a factory ten hours a day
I make good money but I work like a slave
The pressure's been building all week long
But it's Saturday night
And they're playing our song.'*

—from "Slow Dancing" by
Vern Stovall and Bill Palmer

Outside the country-western ballroom, two middle-aged women with dangling earrings climb out of a new pickup truck. One carries a bottle, concealed in a sack, and the other holds open the door. They can't remember how long they've been going to dances on Saturday nights. But their West Texas home town had a Veterans of Foreign Wars Hall, and that's where they learned how to waltz.

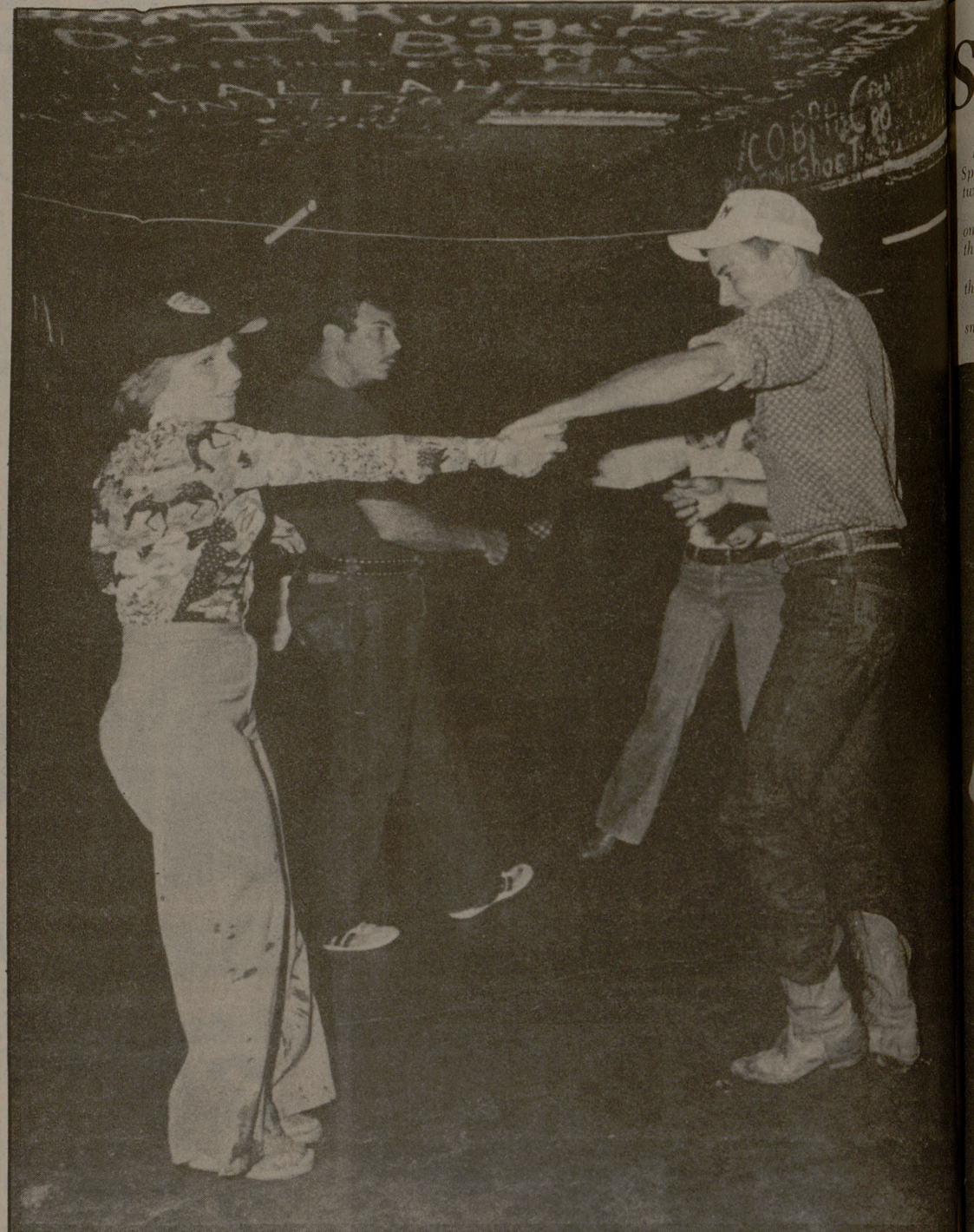
They say that was just about the only nightlife in those days. A local band, a wooden floor, and a man with good dancing feet in his boots: that's the recipe. Back then, you never needed much excuse to have a dance. But nearly every good country wedding would find Grandma dancing with Grandpa, Mom waltzing with Dad, and Little Sister trying her luck with her first polka.

Now the women remember: they learned "kicker dancing" when they were schoolgirls, at a country wedding.

The experts of country-western lore say that kicker dancing probably began the first time someone played a fiddle. Since then, songwriters have produced music to dance to and lyrics that deal with the dancing itself.

Some writers, like Stovall and Palmer, view dancing as a magic salve that alleviates pressures of the working world. But others, like television star Mary Kay Place, describe the dances as opportunities for meeting eligible mates. Her song, "Baby Boy," tells how she met the blue-eyed man of her dreams at a VFW Hall dance.

Inside the ballroom, the two women are seated at a table near the dance floor. Tonight the ballroom is high on couples, low on stag men. They quietly watch the dancers move to the strains of "Please Release Me."



C&W in College Station

... "it's Saturday night and they're playing our song"

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QUESTIONS

Questions? I had a thousand questions within me. What do you want to do with your life? What will the future bring? Why is the world in such bad shape? As I grew older questions were generated within me. I began to see that life was not as simple as it was when I was a child. My friends and I would stay up until the early morning hours to "rap" about our questions and ideas. We had a lot of questions with hardly any answers. It seemed that we could not be satisfied with the answers supplied to us by society and religion.

So the search began. I started with education and sports and stayed very busy, eventually winning an athletic scholarship from a small university. I played for one year and was disappointed. I was busy but knew this was not the answer. My activity was only putting off the issue. I left school and football; my family and friends were shocked.

At this point in my life I was exposed to the drug culture that was prevailing among the young people at the time. My friends and I found ourselves swept up into this trap. At first we thought that this was the answer. When we were on drugs it seemed that all the questions were gone and we felt warm and peaceful within, but as we went on we became emptier and colder. I was fortunate to eventually realize that there was no answer in drugs either. They just made things worse.

I was living in Houston at this time and was tired of all the people, noise, traffic, etc. Maybe this was my problem? "That's it, I need to get away

from here to a small town where life is slower," I said to myself. So I quit my job and moved to a small town in Wisconsin. There I lived quietly for almost two years. It was up in the hills of Wisconsin that I realized that the problem was not something objective, outside of me, but subjective.

Something within me would not allow me to be satisfied. I would sit with friends for hours enjoying the beauty of nature in the peaceful hours of sunset. We would talk about nature, peace, love, life, joy & beauty. But I realized I needed peace inside of me. In man there is something deeper, a deeper need. We are not mere animals that can be satisfied with physical things nor are we just psychological beings that are satisfied with certain stimuli. Man has a need that only God can satisfy.

I came to these conclusions on my own through a lot of searching and thought and questioning. In Wisconsin I received letters from friends in Houston almost every week. One day I was told in a letter about a friend that was very close to me. He had changed. Something was different with him now. He had met the living Christ. I had to investigate. At first I was very skeptical. I had heard about Jesus—how He lived on earth about 1900 yrs. ago, and died on the cross and shed His blood for our sins and resurrected from the dead. I knew there was a God, just about everybody in America knows that. But to me they were just stories of something that happened a long time ago and in no way could affect me today.

One night my friend and I sat for hours talking about how he met Jesus. He didn't say he had learned about Jesus or that he had decided to follow Jesus' teachings. He said he had met the Lord Jesus, received Him with everything He accomplished on the cross and now Jesus Christ was living within him. He said to be a Christian didn't mean to follow some outward regulations or rules but it was to have Jesus Christ living in you. From within He would be all that you needed. As I was listening to him my heart was telling me this was right. So I went home and sitting on my bed, I said, "Lord Jesus I believe in you. Please forgive me for my past. Lord Jesus I receive You." It wasn't a religious prayer but simple & from my heart. At the moment I spoke the first word, the Lord Jesus came and flooded me within. I felt so clean and full inside. My first realization was, "Lord Jesus, you're the one I've been looking for all these years. You are the answer to all my questions." I had found the answer. Finally I had all the things we had talked about for years within me. Jesus is my peace, life, joy, happiness. And everyday He becomes something more to me because He is within and will never leave. That was almost six years ago and I have never been the same because Jesus has never left me. He is no longer just God far, far away but Jesus Christ within, very near and close.

Rick Yeager, '79
846-9708
Paid for by Christian students on campus.



The couples linger on the floor when the song ends. One woman wears a long, polyester gown adorned with an orchid corsage; her partner wears a suit and cowboy boots. Behind them, a pair who look at least 60 are clad in western-style apparel. Another man, wearing an Aggie t-shirt and a cowboy hat, bends to kiss his petite dance partner.

On the dance floor, the difference in individual skill is most apparent. Some can fake their way through a basic two step, imitate a waltz, stumble through a Cotton-Eyed Joe. But a fast-paced polka or schottische separates pseudo-dancers from their genuine counterparts. One solution is dance lessons.

Terry Leone owns and manages Arthur Murray Dance Studios in Dallas, Fort Worth and Odessa. Although his customers usually ask to learn disco and ballroom steps, Leone says there's an increasing demand for country-western dancing. In Ft. Worth, 80 percent of the studio's phone inquiries come from people who want to learn kicker

dancing. But in Dallas, that figure is only 40 percent.

Dance lessons at Texas A&M take the form of Pam Morton's PE classes (social and folk dance) or the Social Dance club, which Morton sponsors. Here students can polish up on their dance steps before making public appearances.

Morton teaches some kicker dance steps, but notes that C&W dancing is not really an accepted dance form.

Morton says she stresses ballroom dance skills because she says kicker dancing is only popular in this part of the country.

Leone says his instructors have names for certain types of dances and warn their students against them.

"Pump-handle Pete" is the man who keeps time with the music by working his partner's arm like a water-pump handle. "Show-off Sammy" dances so fast that his partner can't keep up. "Two-drink Susie" has had so much to drink that she can hardly stand up, yet she

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