

# Ballroom dancers haven't lost touch

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Chris and Ernie Jupin don't pretend to have the panache of Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire as they waltz across the dance floor.

Like other amateurs in the Dartmouth Dance Club, they aren't appearing at monthly dances to show off. They attend for fun, relaxation and companionship.

"The people are very nice . . . very friendly . . . we really like it a lot," said Rose Marie Gonsalves of Field Street, New Bedford, who attends regularly scheduled club dances with her husband, John.

For the Gonsalves, it all began about a year ago when they wanted to attend a dance on a Saturday night. "We felt like dancing and we looked in the newspaper and saw Lee Terry's notice," Mrs. Gonsalves said.

## Chance to practice

Ms. Terry, dance instructor with Dartmouth's Adult Education Program, founded the club in February 1980 after she was beseeched by students to organize routine dances so they could practice their steps.

The students looked for "danceable music" with enough "space to dance," Ms. Terry said, indicating they were tired of dance floors the size of postage stamps.

The dance instructor, wife and mother of three sons hoped her club would stimulate other clubs to form. But this had not happened yet, as far

as she knows. She also hoped there would be renewed interest in ballroom dancing.

She wanted to attract amateur dancers — men and women who might not have taken formal dance classes. She wanted Type I dancers, those who do it for fun and exercise, not Type II, who compete for trophies, Ms. Terry said.

"If you put the two types together, you have a problem, because Type I would feel inferior to Type II," she stressed.

The club, which began with about 25 to 30 members and has grown to about 40 couples, meets monthly (usually on Saturday nights) at the Old Town Hall, South Dartmouth.

Singles are welcome, but since ballroom dancing must be done as partners, most members are coupled, Ms. Terry explained.

Records provide the dance music — anything from the '40s to '80s, and they are played on a "professional sound system" with double turntables. This allows Ms. Terry the ease of phasing out one song and slipping immediately into another.

The Gonsalves and the Jupins prefer records.

## Easier with records

"We find it easier to dance to records than to an orchestra," said Mrs. Gonsalves. Mrs. Jupin elaborated, "You know the rhythm and the tempo isn't going to change in the middle of the song."

Dancing is "good for couples . . . it gives them a night out . . . it adds

a whole new dimension to their lives. It puts them together and when they go out they meet other couples who have a similar interest," Ms. Terry said.

For Mrs. Jupin and her husband, a foreman with the New England Telephone Co., dancing "is something we both look forward to."

But her husband wasn't always comfortable doing the tango or cha-cha. "He was so sure in his mind that he had no rhythm . . . that he couldn't be taught (to dance)," she said, adding that lessons "on and off" for the past six years have changed his mind. "Now, you can't sit him down," she joked.

"My husband prefers the waltz and I prefer the Latin dances. I think he really excels in the tango," she said.

When she's dancing it's easy to forget everything else, said Mrs. Jupin, but her husband "is very aware of what he's doing on the dance floor. He still has to do a lot of concentrating . . . it's not natural for him; he's not a natural-born dancer, but to look at him you'd never know it," she said with pride.

## "Help each other"

Dancing has even been beneficial to their marriage, said Mrs. Jupin. "You're a team. You don't want to get out there and look like a fool, so you help each other out while you're dancing. You want to look good and you want him to look good, so you do little things to help each other out," she said.

Ms. Terry feels practice is advantageous to any couple. "I tell them they have to practice. If you took any other course you wouldn't think of not doing homework. So why would you take dancing classes and not do homework?" Ms. Terry asks.

The instructor finds that most women adapt to dancing more easily than men. "When a man feels he's too old to participate in sports, he sometimes turns to dancing. She has been dancing most of her life. In essence, she has to slow herself down to let him catch up. It requires more patience on the woman's part," said Ms. Terry.

Mrs. Gonsalves' husband, meat manager and cutter at Liberty Supermarket on Dartmouth Street, needed some "extra lessons" to pick up fancier footwork. "He always liked to dance but he didn't have all the know-how," Mrs. Gonsalves said.

"With lessons, we learned dances we never did before. We were glad we did it."



If disco did anything, said Ms. Terry, it brought couples together again in contact dancing as can be seen in this view of the dance floor.



The Dartmouth Dance Club's monthly dances often consider themes. The banner

and silhouetted dancers reflect February's.