

# FEATURE STORY

## Bob and Janet Weber

"When were you going to tell me about this?" asked my wife. With brain synapses firing rapidly I assessed the situation to retrieve in the deep recesses of my mind if should feel guilty, defensive, or confused. Fortunately the twinkle in her eye and the chuckle in her tone told me she was being her usual impish self. We'd been attending dance lessons for a few weeks, and it seemed apparent that I had some ability for ballroom dancing. Humorously, she wondered why I hadn't told her before about my talent for dancing. I was tempted to retort, "How was I to know? I never did it before."

A few weeks prior to that inquisition, we had agreed to participate in dance lessons sponsored by a local adult education program. A wedding dance loomed in the near future for a friend and his engaged daughter. He rounded up eight other couples, and we made a social event out of it. I think he wanted company in his misery, dancing in front of a hundred or so guests was not his idea of fun. And yet, it was his daughter's wedding, so off we all went.

### *A Two-Step Further*

After my wife and I discovered that we had not only a love for dancing but also a modicum of rhythm and musicality, we decided to pursue dancing further. It took a little time to get into the ballroom-dance social scene. We had trouble finding places to engage in our new hobby; this was in the late 90s when dancing was more of a club scene where everyone did what I like to call "the shake and bake," not much choreography or style and even fewer men on the floor. Also, we didn't want to go to night clubs.

A step in our journey toward ballroom dancing on a regular basis occurred when we found another class to attend. The instructors turned out to be students of Brian Nash, who

owns the studio we now attend on a regular basis. The class with Paul and Carmelita provided us with just the right social atmosphere, encouragement, and good instruction to get us hooked. Now we go through withdrawal if we haven't danced at least once a week.

### *Our Fears Allayed*

Ballroom dancing can make some people a little self-conscious. It did to us, especially as novices. Paul kept assuring us while teaching us the social foxtrot that it was like a walk in the park, comfortable and pleasant. When we attended our first big dance social (in a full gym at Rutgers University), the self-conscious factor was at work in a big way. It seemed like everyone there could dance rings around us. When we got up to "take a walk in the park," it felt more like a mugging. Everyone seemed to be speeding past, around, and almost through us. It took a few more forays into the socials at Rutgers, but before we knew it, we got comfortable with our own abilities.

I wouldn't say we are now accomplished dancers, but the joy and fun we gain from ballroom dancing has made the trip through self-consciousness worthwhile. With our dance friends we have found a comfortable social network. With the exercise we get every week, we have a great way to improve our health. It is hard to imagine living without ballroom dancing now.

