



SIDE-BAR COMMENTS

Club Hours
 Wednesday 7 PM - 1 AM
 Friday 7 PM - 1 AM
 Saturday 7PM - 1 AM
 Sunday 7 PM - 12 PM

MARDI GRAS
 1500 Oaklawn Ave.
 Cranston, RI
 (401) 463-3080

Wednesday Night
 Line Dance Lessons at
 7:00 with Debbie Bliss

This newsletter can be
 viewed on line at
www.mikeponte.com/mardigras



Diamond Rodeo Newsletter - Editor, Layout & Photos: Michael Ponte August
 Co-editor: Joe Macera Writer, Columnist: Esther Scittarelli, Rita Polce 2001

interview links
bioGraphy reviews

An Old Friend

This past Friday night at the Diamond Rodeo the news that Joe Shutt would be there on Saturday night was being passed among his old students and friends. Most of us go way back with Joe and credit him with our knowledge of country dancing. I had different plans for Saturday night mainly because I had been at the club on Wednesday and Friday of the same week but how could I go without saying "Hi" to Joe and remembering old times. Everyone felt the way I did so we all decided we would meet on Saturday night and welcome Joe to his old stomping grounds (excuse the pun).



Joe Shutt

Joe hadn't been to the club for some time because he wasn't supposed to dance (doctor's orders). He had a medical problem with his knee, which is now on the mend. Most of us were his students when country music had a revival about the time of Billy Rae

Cyrus and the "Achy Breaky Heart". Joe taught on Monday and Tuesday nights at the Mardi Gras and the club was packed with students wanting to learn all the new dances. The Journal sent photographers and columnists to keep track of the new craze and of the man who was the king of country-dance instructors. Many who took lessons from him became dance teachers themselves and Joe always helped them to get started. He's a very friendly person and always willing to go the extra mile for anyone.

As we waited for Joe to enter the Diamond Rodeo we talked about our experiences with him and country dancing. Joe walked into the club and everyone either gave him a kiss, hug, or handshake to welcome an old friend back to the fold. The familiar smile was on his face but his trademark cowboy hat was missing. I guess that's because he was riding his new Honda Motorcycle. He did a few line dances and it was like he never left the club, he was his old confident self as we remembered him.

When Joe taught he made it easy for everyone to learn. If you couldn't roll you did a vine and even if you had two left feet you always came away from his class learning something new. He's the best and we hope he returns to teaching. I talked with Joe about the new things in his life and of course "how was Janette" his wife, to which he answers, "Jeanette

who" which is a standing joke between us. Jeanette is usually always at different functions to do with country dancing and she even taught with him at the Mardi Gras. Well Joe I don't have to tell you how great it was for everyone to see you because you could see it on our faces. Don't stay away for so long because to us you're an old friend we can never forget. Good luck and get back to teaching; it's something you do really well.
 ----Rita Polce

Line Dancing

Seven words that make me break out in a cold sweat ... "and one ...three...five, six, seven, eight..." Followed by "coaster forward right, coaster back right..." (Hey! Look at me! I'm line-dancing!) Then the moment of truth slow vaudeville syncopated weave ...sailor shuffle ...stomp, hitch, turn, clap, slap, hitch, click, rock step forward, rock step back. . . Monterey, Monterey, 1 /4 turn left, full shuffle turn right, kick ball change kick ball change pivot turn pivot turn jazz box turning jazz box throw your partner up in the air for a 1 /2 flip, pike position, smile for the Russian judge, crossing triple step, stomp hitch turn clap slap. . . START AGAIN! What?. Everyone else moving in unison, with such grace and I'm thinking, hmmm, what's a slow vaudeville? I'm so out of step I might as well be wearing clown shoes and bunny ears, doing the hokey-

pokey
 So why do it? A couple of years ago GAP did a commercial with about 10 seconds of line dancing... and I thought, 1) Hey, that looks like fun. 2) Wow, looks like great exercise. 3) Hey, that looks easy! Yes, it is fun. And in the rare moments that I actually get the steps right (okay, so it was only once) it's incredible fun and an outrageous sense of accomplishment (Did you see me? Did you see me? I got it right!). And yes, it is great exercise - literally not for the faint of heart. Let's face it, aerobics instruction has nothing on line dancing... But no, (a really BIG NO) it's not easy - not easy to get your feet to move in the right direction, or even in the same direction your body is moving. And I've discovered I have the mental retention of a radish ...I learn the second eight count, can't remember the first eight count...
 So for all the people who can jump out on the floor and do all the steps IN UNISONcan dance all night... truly I'm in awe in you. I don't think I'll ever be good enough at this to "earn" a cowboy hat, but my hat's off to you anyway. And a thank you to all the people who have been so friendly, welcoming, encouraging and patient ...and special thanks to Deb for her patience, and not rolling her eyes when she says "you've already learned that dance 3 times!" Truthfully, I always leave feeling better than when I arrived. And now I have to go find my clown shoes
 ---- Anne Billings

only dance that related to Western Dance.
 Today, however, more and more people are attending workshops, festivals, competitions, and are getting the taste for all aspects of Western Dance.
 Many of the Line Dance Fraternities have outgrown their speciality and have ventured into Two Step, Waltz, Polka, Cha Cha, Swing, and now ... Nightclub Two Step ... broadening their capacity to learn more and more technique, style, posture, etc.
 It is quite exciting and refreshing to see these teenagers having a ball on the dance floor. More and more instructors are being asked to teach the couple dances. And line dancing in some areas is now coming in second to partner and couple dancing. Instructors are reverting to having partner classes on a different night than line dance classes.
 Which brings me to the point of asking, "Does the instructor really explore the possibilities of what they can offer to their classes." How many times have they been asked to show Two Step, etc. And now there is an opening to get people interested, even if it is the basics, it is an opening.
 Try attending competitions and take up the offer of workshops which are geared not only to learning Line Dancing, but geared to technique, posture, styling, and basic footwork. You will be surprised at what we don't know and the little that we do know will be beneficial in more ways than one.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BECOMING THE DANCER YOU WANT TO BE

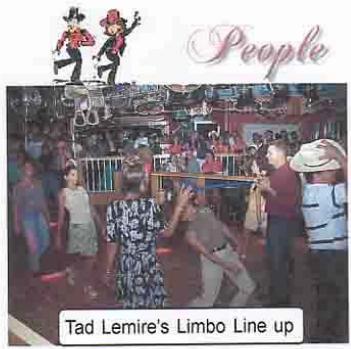
1. LISTEN to the music. Without music there isn't any reason to dance. Listen to all types of music.

GOOD BALANCE

2. TAKE dance lessons You can not teach yourself proficiently.
3. PRACTICE by yourself, with a partner, with many different partners as well as your teacher.
4. GO DANCING as often as possible.
5. SEEK other teachers. Don't rely on only one teacher. Each teacher has a different approach. Different people learn different ways. Expose yourself to a variety of styles.
6. SELECT a coach. Depending on how good a dancer you want to become, social or competitive.
7. STUDY Learn as much as you can about dancing, the history, the music. Knowledge is very important.
8. SET GOALS What do you want to accomplish? Within what time limit?
9. SPREAD the word. Tell friends about dancing, get them interested. This will make your life more rewarding.
10. DANCE with everyone, the good dancers and the "new" dancers. You can learn something from everyone.

QUESTION: WHY DO WE DANCE COUNTERCLOCKWISE AROUND THE DANCE FLOOR?

Answer: Counterclockwise is not only the direction of dance, it is the direction of both ice and roller skating, and fundamentally the direction of turn in numerous other sports, especially those which are couple related. It is the natural outgrowth of the majority of the people being right handed. A man reaches for his partner with his right hand. As a result, they customarily kept the woman on the right side. In turning the partner toward you in closed or open position, the man can see to his left, and because of the alignment turn to his left much easier than to the right in many positions.
 No one that I have ever read of or know of ever felt there was one person we could give credit to for standardizing the counterclockwise movement (but in the 1200-1400s, when the waltz and a few fore-runners were being standardized, by custom you can bet that some king naturally took his partner from his right side and naturally moved forward and to the left, and as a result everybody, by tradition, fell in behind him). This is of course a theory and not a fact, but the idea of people turning to the left because of being right handed and, shall we say, right footed. They tell me people lost in the woods tend to circle to the left, so you can see there is a lot of naturalness involved in what right handed people, who are the majority 90% tend to do so. This came from the theory that right handed people take a longer stride with their right foot, which means they naturally curve left, this being their strongest stride.
 In addition, through the years, first the girl was customarily slightly to the man's right, by the natural process of turning her toward himself, having reached her with the right hand from his right side. There are just so many items that would tend to make it more comfortable moving counterclockwise.
 Whether any of this fully covers the situation could be left to conjecture. In all the books and dance encyclopedias that I have known of and reviewed, no one was given credit for the counterclockwise direction.



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Structural / Mechanical

August 2001

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
 Sundays Joe Macera			1	2	3 Line Dance Lessons Cat Country Dance Party	4 Line Dance Lessons
5 Two - Step Lessons	6	7	8 Line Dance Lessons	9	10 Line Dance Lessons Cat Country Dance Party	11 Line Dance Lessons
12 Two - Step Lessons	13	14	15	16	17 Line Dance Lessons Cat Country Dance Party	18 Line Dance Lessons
19 Two - Step Lessons	20	21	22 Line Dance Lessons	23	24 Line Dance Lessons Cat Country Dance Party	25 Line Dance Lessons
26 Two - Step Lessons	27	28	29	30	31 Line Dance Lessons Cat Country Dance Party	
Sunday - Two Step Lessons at 7:00 with Joe Macera Wednesday - Line Dance Lessons at 7:00 with Debbie Bliss Friday & Saturday - Line Dance Lessons at 7:00 with Gail McKenna			 Wednesdays Debbie Bliss		 Friday and Saturdays Gail McKenna	