



Line Dance Lessons
Wednesdays & Thursdays
7:00 - 8:00

Two Step Lessons
Thursdays
7:00 - 7:30

Friday - Line Dance Lessons at 7:00 with Gail McKenna
Cat Country Dance Party Night Every Friday
Saturday - Line Dance Lessons at 7:00 with Gail McKenna



Wayne Learned



Joe Macera



**Fridays & Saturdays
Gail McKenna**



**SIDE-BAR
COMMENTS**

Club Hours

Wednesday 7 PM - 1 AM
Thursday 7 PM - 1 AM
Friday 7 PM - 1 AM
Saturday 7PM - 1 AM

**MARDI
GRAS**

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

Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays
Free Line Dance Lessons
Fri - Gail McKenna
Wed - Wayne Learned 7 - 8 PM
Thursday
Two Step Lessons 7:00 - 7:30 with Joe Macera
Line Dance Lessons with Wayne Learned 7:30 - 9:00

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



Quick Quick... Slow Slow



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Facilitator: Joe Macera - Contributors: Al Foster, Bill O'Brien, Esther Scittarelli
December 2006

I used to, actually, be a regular here at the Diamond Rodeo a long time ago. I've been away for about 10 years. Before I can tell my story of why my absence and the reason for my return, I think I should start at the beginning of what brought me here in the first place.

Dancing had always been my passion. Country music, however, wasn't. I have to really give credit to my niece, Kim, for literally forcing me to listen to it. We used to work together and, upon her insistence, Cat Country 98.1 was constantly being played. Sawyer Brown's song, "Some Girls Do" was really the song that swayed me into becoming a country music fan. In fact, that entire band played a big role in how I ended up at the Diamond Rodeo at all.

I was in my early thirties at the time and was nothing short of a recluse. You see, I was very heavy, morbidly obese actually. I never went anywhere but to work and back. It was as if I was living a life of non-existence. Just getting up in the morning was difficult. Facing another day was downright painful. To say I was in a deep depression would be putting it mildly. Then Sawyer Brown was introduced into my life via the radio. I started to watch CMT on TV hoping to catch their videos and was amazed at the way the lead singer, Mark Miller, would dance. He was so full of life and spirit. Everything I wanted to be. Well, after doing some research, I found out that he

and I are the same age, only months apart. I found the strength in their music and inspiration in Mark's dancing to finally do something about my situation. This band literally changed my life. I started walking daily, short walks at first and then increasingly longer. I dieted like crazy. Sweated to the oldies with Richard Simmons. Unfortunately NOT the healthy way to lose weight I'm afraid but,

never missed a local performance since then. Over the years we've actually become friends. Mark Miller and the "boys" will always have a special place in my heart. It was then that Kim and I started talking about trying to get up the nerve to try line dancing. By now I was an avid country music fan and was totally hooked on living the whole country life-style. We wanted to go so badly to the



Cyndie

honestly, I really didn't care about healthy back then....just wanted to get the weight off. With their help (Sawyer Brown/Mark Miller) and my determination, I shed over 120 lbs. In less than a year. I traveled to Long Island to see them in concert for the first time in July of 1994 and was actually able to tell them each personally what their band did for me. They were moved by my story, especially Mark. I

Diamond Rodeo but were scared to death. Then we heard an advertisement for a little club in the Warwick plaza that was giving dance lessons. Kim and I started off there. It was an amazing experience. Only a handful of people ever showed up so it was a perfect environment to really learn and practice. We were able to perfect over 50 popular dances there and when the lessons were canceled for

lack of people, we finally felt ready to hit the big club, The Diamond Rodeo. I remember walking through these doors that first night. Kim and I literally clung to each other as we made our way to a table. The large table near the end set of doors that was to become our regular spot. Laura was the dance instructor back then and we waited with nervous anticipation for the lessons to begin. When we were finally called to the floor we were surprised that the dance being taught, which was Canadian Stomp, came to us so easily. All our prior practice had paid off. We became regulars never missing a week. Laura eventually left and was replaced by Gail. Gail is so sweet and so awesome. She actually played a big role in my returning to the Diamond Rodeo. The memories I made here with Kim will be etched in my mind forever. We had finally "made it" here at the "Big Club"! That gave us a sense of pride that I'm sure neither one of us will ever forget.

However time has a way of changing lives and, sadly, over time our lives did change. Kim and I had a falling out and parted ways. Our dancing days together were over. What we both had worked so hard to achieve was gone. Coming here without her just wasn't the same so eventually, I too, just faded away and stayed home. This put me back into a deep depression. I turned to my old friend, food, for comfort and managed to eat my way back to the same weight that I was before. Once again, I found myself, alone, miserable and home bound merely existing. Even my inspiration band, Sawyer Brown, wasn't pulling me out of this one. Not this time. Then one day, I was reading in my local paper (North Kingstown) that they were offering country line

dance lessons at one of our local schools and Gail was going to be the instructor!!! I asked my daughter if she would join with me and surprisingly she agreed. So, off we went. All the same emotions I had experienced before came flooding back as I faced walking through those gym doors. I felt so badly about the way I had let myself go but I knew that I had to try to do this again. Gail was so happy to see me after so long. She was so nice and so very encouraging. I attended every class she instructed. I would always tell her that one day, when I lost this weight again, I would, once again make it back to the Diamond Rodeo. But that day didn't come quickly I'm afraid. I think I stayed with Gail and those classes for at least two years. It was a great time in my life, don't get me wrong....had so much fun trying to relearn all that I had forgotten but it also just wasn't the same. I just couldn't find the inspiration again to change my life the way I did before.

Well eventually those classes ended and I feared that was the end of my dancing days forever. Then in February of this year, 2006, my daughter asked me if I would join Weight Watchers with her. Reluctantly I told her I would, remembering that she was there for me when I didn't want to walk into those lessons alone. At our very first meeting, the weight watcher leader named Barbara asked the group on a scale of 1 to 10 how determined we were to finally lose this weight and be successful. I remember she looked right at me and I sheepishly answered, 11. I think that was the turning point for me. I meant was I had said. I sat there thinking that this just had to work this time. I had wasted enough of my life being alone and miserable. I

missed my passion, dancing. I missed the Diamond Rodeo. I made up my mind that night that I was going to do whatever it took to get my life back. And that's exactly what I did. It wasn't easy. This time I had to do things the right way, the healthy way. To my surprise, by following their program to the letter, it worked. The weight started to come off. I felt better and stronger with each passing week. It wasn't easy but I never wavered and stayed focused on my goal to return to dancing one day. Finally, after successfully losing, again, over 120lbs, I was ready to make my return to the Diamond Rodeo. It was just this November when I found myself sitting in my car in the parking lot, alone and so very nervous I could literally feel my heart pounding in my chest with anticipation. I remember looking at my watch and knew it was time and I had to get out of the car and head for the door. Now one might think that sounds like an easy thing to do but it wasn't for me. I actually think my knees were shaking as I walked towards the door. I didn't know what to expect. It had been so very long and I was alone...no Kim by my side this time. I remembered buying my ticket and making my way through that familiar swinging door. I instinctively made my way directly to my old table. I took a deep breath, looked around a bit and to my surprise, things really hadn't changed much at all. Then I spotted Gail!! I couldn't wait to see her and give her a great big hug and let her know that I finally did it....I made it back. It was so good to see her again I really can't find the words to express how happy a moment it was for me. This time I was eager to take my place, once again, on the dance floor. I'm trying very hard to relearn the dances I've forgotten but I know this

will take time. I've made a lot of wonderful friends here. Everyone is so very friendly and very supportive. Even when I "vine" in the wrong direction and accidentally run into someone, they don't get upset. Bless their hearts. I feel complete again and so grateful that I've been given another chance to live and pursue my passion of dancing. This time it was Gail and Weight Watchers that helped pull me back from the brink of despair. I will never walk into this club without giving Gail a great big hug. She's helped me so much over the years being entwined in my life. She's watched the struggle and the battle I had to win to be able to walk through these doors again. Gail, from the bottom of my heart, thank you. I owe you a debt of gratitude for helping me gain the courage, strength and determination needed to return. I couldn't have done it without you.

Cyndie



NICK'S

Six Forty Two South Pickett Street in Alexandria Virginia is a ramble of brick and mortar that couldn't make its mind up if it wanted to be an apartment building or a warehouse or a strip mall. It decided on a couple of retail stores and Nick's. The sign over the DJ booth says: "Nick's, The Premier Country and Western Night Club in Northern Virginia". Everything else says that it's a honky tonk. I'd been working 12 and 14 hour days and this was the first day that I'd gotten off work early enough to even consider going out. I found Nick's on



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Bill's Corner



William H. O'Brien III

It hasn't been that long since this newsletter and the previous one, which is excellent. Joe Macera will make his rounds trying to get people to write about a topic, which really isn't that hard. We, the

regulars who write can tell you that its fun. Write about YOU, how the club plays part in your life, country music, and the people here. I could go on and on what to write about. We love reading about people and their experiences here. Al Foster for instance, he touched on some of the history of this place, Gloria Tetu contributes, Ernie Levesque contributes as well as others and photos taken by Mike Ponte (www.mikeponte.com) and myself (www.w1pro.com) are added for your viewing pleasure. So.....I asked..... HOW ABOUT YOU?

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Looking Back



Al Foster

The New Years Eve party at the Diamond Rodeo was another successful event, great food and drink and dance. It was a great experience to witness the old year go away and welcome in the new with friends. Looking back over the many years of dancing here, the club has evolved into a great meeting place. If that saddle hanging in the center of the dance floor could talk, wow....it might tell you about how the oak dance floor was expanded from the original size. At one time you could sit at tables and railings all around the floor. It might tell you about how the DJ booth at one time was set up behind the bar. How many remember the new carpeting that was put in years ago? It can tell you about the Electric Bull Riding out on the patio, great meals being served Sunday nights.

Some of us even remember when they were putting down the oak floor and announced that the club was going to have a country music dance room, several of us said. "What?.. It wont last".....Well that statement was wrong. So, lets see what 2007 brings, broken hearts and broken promises for sure. All we can anticipate is another great year ahead at the club.

A sincere thank you has to go to the staff, the instructors and management for making our meeting place safe and enjoyable...Cya.

Albert Foster

Country Music Profiles

(I'll be contributing to the newsletter from time to time, profiling some of country's best artists. You dance to their music so you might as well learn a little about them....)

"Ladies Love Country Boys"
Profiling Trace Adkins



Gloria Tetu

Show up very early on a Friday night, while Gail plays some warm-up dances, and you'll hear me and Bill O'Brien holler at her, "TURN IT UP SOME!" Gail knows what that means. It's time for some Trace and some Honky Tonk Badonkadonk! (step sheet is at the end of this article, if you want to learn it dancing in the living room while your dog/cat watches).

Trace Adkins helped keep country's traditionalist flame burning during the crossover-happy late '90s, mixing classic honky tonk with elements of gospel, blues, and rock & roll. Adkins was born in the small Louisiana town of Sarepta in 1962, and took up the guitar at an early age; he went on to study music at Louisiana Tech, where he also played football, and worked on an offshore oil rig after graduating. His finger was severed in an accident while on the job, and once several years had passed, he returned to music

with the gospel quartet the New Commitments. He moved to Nashville in 1992 and did construction work to survive while he sang at night and looked for his break. It came three years after his move when then-Capitol Records president Scott Hendricks spotted him playing in a working man's bar outside Nashville and signed him. Trace's one-of-a-kind voice and his knack for putting believability into songs dealing with love, loss, sex, and blue-collar realities did the rest. In the early '90s he began to pursue a solo career, playing honky tonk bars as often as he could, and honing a powerful, wide-ranging baritone voice in the process. He spent several years on the circuit, and finally moved to Nashville to try his luck in the industry; he was quickly signed to Capitol Records, who'd produced the likes of Brooks & Dunn and Alan Jackson.



Trace Adkins

"Honky Tonk Badonkadonk," is the kind of no-holds-barred smash most artists can only dream about. Its attraction for a wider audience can be seen in the fact that in a world where 70% of downloaded ring tones are urban and hip-hop tracks, some 75,000 people added "Badonkadonk" to their cell phones in just six weeks. The song helped increase sales of Trace's Songs About

Me album every week for four months, culminating in Christmas week sales of 134,157 albums. It was a fitting breakthrough for a man who has brought a working-class mentality to bear on a career that has built slowly to its present heights.

HONKY TONK BADONKADONK* line dance
MUSIC: Honky Tonk Badonkadonk by Trace Adkins
Start 8 counts after 8 count measure when he says "Left, Left, Left, Right, Left ..."

TOUCHES, TRIPLE IN PLACE, ONE-HALF PIVOT
1-2 Step Right to right, touch Left beside right
3-4 Step Left to left, touch Right beside Left
5&6 Triple Right, Left, Right in place
7-8 Step Left forward, turn 1/2 right shifting weight to Right

LEFT VINE, COASTER, STEP TOUCH
1-2 Step Left to left, Right behind Left
3-4 Step Left to left, touch Right beside Left
5&6 Step back Right, step Left beside Right, step Right forward
7-8 Step Left to left, touch Right beside Left

POINTS, KICKBALL CHANGE ONE-QUARTER TURN RIGHT
1-2 Point Right to right, step Right forward across Left
3-4 Point Left to left, step Left forward across Right
5&6 Kick Right forward, raise Left heel stepping on ball of Right beside Left, drop Left heel
7-8 Turn 1/4 right stepping on Right, hold

ONE-HALF PIVOT, STEPS, SIDE SHUFFLE, ROCK

BACK
1-2 Step Left forward, turn 1/2 over right shoulder shifting weight to Right
3-4 Walk forward Left, Right
5&6 Step Left to left side, bring Right to Left, step Left to left side
7-8 Rock back on Right, recover weight forward to Left

SMILE AND KEEP DANCING
*(wonderin' what a "badonkadonk" is? Well, you sit on it....It's your back-end!)

Lyrics:

Turn it up some!
Alright boys, this is her favorite song, you know that, right? So if we play it good and loud she might get up and dance again
Aw she's puttin her beer down
Here she comes, here she comes
Left, left, left-right-left

Hustlers shootin' eight ball ,
Throwin' darts at the walls
Feeling damn near 10 feet tall ,
Here she comes Lord help us all
Old TW's girlfriend done slapped him out his chair
Poor ol'boy it ain't his fault, it's so hard not to stare at that

Chorus:
Honky tonk badonkadonk
Keepin' perfect rhythm make you wanna swing along
Got it goin' on like Donkey Kong
And ooo wee shut my mouth, slap your grandma
There ought to be a law, get the sheriff on the phone
Lord have mercy how'd she even get them britches on
With that honky tonk badonkadonk

Now honey you can't blame her for what her mama gave her
It ain't right to hate her for working that moneymaker

Band shuts down at two but we're hanging out 'til three
We hate to see her go but love to watch her leave with that

Repeat Chorus
Oh that's what I'm talkin' 'bout right there

We don't care about the drinkin', barely listen to band
Our hands they start to shakin' when she gets the urge to dance
Drivin' everybody crazy you think you fell in love
Boys you better keep your distance, you can look but you can't touch

Repeat Chorus
That honky tonk badonkadonk
Spoken: That's it right there boys, that's why we do what we do
It ain't for the money, it ain't for the glory, it ain't for the free whiskey
It's for the..... badonkadonk!

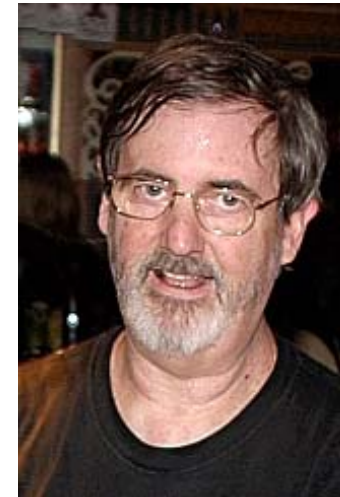


People





the Internet before I headed down to Washington, D.C. on business. Nick's has a web site and they even have a map. I rushed back to the hotel for the map, a quick shower, a change, and of course, my boots!



Ernie Levesque

I roll in about 8:00 and find I'm right in the middle of line dance lessons. The instructor is Ron. He seems like a nice guy. We are the only guys on the dance floor. Ron mentions the name of the dance and I already know it. I take this as a good sign. I'll look better during the lesson, and one of my fears has been eliminated. The fear that they might not do any dances that I know.

The lessons are over in no time and one of my other fears come to mind. What dances go with what songs? The DJ puts that problem off by announcing that the band isn't ready, so he will play a "two step" song. And I'm left with the ultimate fear: Will I find someone to dance with me? As I turn, there she is, not more than four steps away. I walk over and ask her to dance. I'm already to move on but she says yes?! All goes well during the dance and I'm heading back to my drink when I notice a young woman has taken a spot at the side of the dance floor next to my

drink. I approach, nod a greeting, and pick up my drink. The DJ announces another "two step" as the band is not ready. I put down my drink and ask the woman standing by my drink. Again, the answer is yes, and, again, all goes well during the dance. I'm batting a 1000 for both dances and women. How long can that hold out?

The band starts up. They are the "The Dallas Band". I'm pretty sure that they have never been very far out of Virginia. They are a "Top Forty Cover Band". They start with Rockie Lynne's "Lipstick". And the dance turns out to be the "El Paso Cha Cha". My luck is holding; but in the time it takes to identify the dance however, a large number of the available women are already dancing. I turn and see a tall blond woman. She's wearing a white blouse and jeans and she has to be six feet tall. She is not "drop dead" gorgeous. She is more like; "Heart attack, stroke, and three weeks in intensive care" gorgeous. I start to walk but my mind is telling me to forget it. I keep walking and my mind says to sit this one out. Now I've got Lee Ann Womack doing the arguing for me. I hear my own voice ask, "Do you know this dance?" How lame is that? I feel something warm in my hand and I realize that it is her hand. I've actually had the audacity to put my hand out as if her answer is a "fait de complete"! No matter, presumptuous or not, she has not taken offense and we are dancing. At the end of each dance pattern there are four shuffle steps. She does four turns. I notice her hand again, only to realize how little I am doing in terms of helping her balance during the turns. At the end of the dance, out of nowhere, I give her two extra turns. I look at her and say: "I guess you do know this

dance.". She laughs and thanks me! I'm a hit! It is that last time I see her... ever. As I'm heading back to my drink some cowboy asks the girl by my drink to dance. As it turns out this works out pretty well because I don't know the dance. It is something called "The Barn Dance" and it is like "Renegade" only on Valium. My luck asking women to dance holds out for all of the dances that I do know and I do know a lot of the dances. I guess I should explain at this point that Nick's has no rules concerning what dances are done and where they are done. The line dancers occupy the middle of the dance floor but it is likely that they will have to dodge some people doing Latin, or Swing dances. The line of dance for "two step" or "couples dances" is similarly, occasionally, blocked by the line dancers and may have to snake around a couple or two doing a "Cha Cha"! Things are pretty normal for a while; which is to say pretty abnormal, as my luck is holding better than I would have ever guessed. Then a little brunette came up beside me. After a couple of seconds, she gives me a nudge. I turn and look down. She looks up. She has bright dark eyes and a quality about her. I'm not sure you would call her beautiful but you would definitely notice her in a crowd. She says: "Do you want to west coast swing?" I say that I'm sorry but I only know east coast swing. She turns her head to look, across the dance floor, at the band. When she looks back at me she has a wry smile and her eyes are even brighter. She says: "You know."; and she pauses for effect. She glances down demurely. When she looks back at me she finishes "You can east coast swing to

this music." My expression must have been precious because she starts to laugh. I suspect it was a mix of "duh" and "You had me at 'Do you want'." She takes my hand and two steps and now we are one of those couples that other dancers will have to snake around. I could care! I got to dance with that pretty little brunette three times; a different dance each time. I miss her already. I've stayed way longer than I should have and I'll be paying for that tomorrow: But you know what? Again, I don't care! I'm thinking about a live band, good dancing and great women (not in that order). The background music, of my life, fades in. It is Jennifer Nettles and Jon Bonjovi. I guess you really can take it with you when you go. Or maybe there was just a little bit of it here waiting for me. I don't know which. What I do know is that there is only one reason that I found this place; and there only one reason that I needed to come here; and there is only one thing that could have made this night any better... If it had all happened back home: "The only place they call me one of their own".

Ernie Levesque



People

