

Column Write

Ballroom On A Budget: Mini-Workshops

by Walt Fink

When Jan and I began taking ballroom dance lessons nearly six years ago, one of the first things our instructor told us was that students generally never get better or more proficient if they just come to take the weekly lesson and don't practice on their own.

Good advice. We got pretty diligent about temporarily clearing the furniture from our den and going through steps and sequences on a daily basis. We got fairly good on the amateur scale, though certainly not anywhere near a competition level. We're just social dancers.

Like all good things, it came to an end of sorts when our personal economy took some sharp and unexpected turns. We were forced to reconsider our finances and priorities, and along with the lattes and capuccinos, had to forego some of the niceties of life. Dance lessons were unfortunately one of the victims on that hit list.

Somehow, we seemed to have also gotten busier, so that our frequency of dancing dropped too, to the point that we didn't practice much any more---and just like our instructor had told us back in the beginning, our proficiency (if it can be called that) suffered too. We'd get out on the dance floor at our monthly USADance gatherings and flail at some steps we used to be pretty good at.

Deciding there had to be a better solution, we took a cue from all the "workshops" in *Amateur Dancers* magazine, talked to another couple in our same relative financial boat, and resolved to try our own mini-workshop sessions.

Our agreement was that we'd take turns dancing at each others' house on an every-other-week basis to begin with. In keeping with our budgetary goals, this didn't include going for a meal, so the host/hostess wasn't obligated to lay out anything special, just provide the dance floor. As to what dances we'd practice, we left that up to the respective host. After all, it's their house.

Our friends---having had the incredible foresight to construct a nice big dance floor when they built their new house---were better equipped to host the traveling dances while our house was better for the more stationary ones.

How's it working so far? Darn fine, if you ask me. This has been a really rewarding experiment and a tonic for our dancing for certain. We've learned new steps and "re-learned" others. Maybe the right word is "refined" rather than "re-learned"---we'd perhaps lost sight of the proper way to get into or terminate a move or step and our adaptation, while allowing us to do the maneuver, wasn't what we'd been taught. The synergy---the whole being greater than the sum of its parts---has been terrific as we've learned lots from each other. I highly recommend this approach to everyone.

I quickly point out that none of us are instructors or lay any claim to be---we'd still like to get back into the "classroom routine" with our dance teachers so we can polish and refine our routines and progress on to more advanced dances with more advanced steps. It'd be nice to go on these workshop cruises and such, but right now, the budgetary considerations dictate that we continue to strike out on our own and do some of these in-house workshops.

And that's better than outhouse workshops.



New Look For The Fox Tales

The sharp-eyed among you will have already noticed some subtle changes in the appearance of your newsletter this time around. This is---believe it or not---progress. Of sorts anyway. This issue marks the first to be sent out electronically to our members and other recipients with e-mail addresses, so some changes were made to (hopefully) ensure those receiving it would get a "whole" document and not something all SNAFU'd via the e-mail gremlins. Things like embedded fonts and scaled graphics and other terms of which I had no earthly knowledge until I got down to the mechanics of sending out an e-newsletter.

For this first experimental issue, we're going to a dual mailing; the regular mailings will go out as always, but the e-version will also be sent to those with e-mail addresses.

Obviously, the e-version allows you to get your newsletter in color (provided you have a color monitor and/or printer) and cuts down on postage the chapter has to pay. Now---Please!---I **really** need feedback from those of you who'll take the time to give it to me. Did you get your e-newsletter OK? Were the photos all satisfactory? Was the text clear? Garbled? And most importantly, would you prefer to get your Fox Tales in this manner or by regular mail? This is aimed at our chapter budget---always a concern. Thanks in advance. . . .

Walt

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The Board of Directors meets preceding the dances at 6:15 P.M.

Fox Tales Newsletter Statement

All opinions expressed in the *Fox Tales* are those of the respective author and do not constitute official policy of USADance or of Greater Fox Valley Chapter 2042. Letters to the Editor will be published only if they're signed. We welcome articles, proposals, photographs, and ideas from all of our members. Articles are published on a space available basis and with the approval of the Newsletter Chairperson. Originals will be returned upon request. Send your contributions to:

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DANCING WITH THE STARS

Ken Richards, Director Promotions & Publicity for USADance provided a copy of this article taken from AdAge.com

August 30, 2005

By Abby Klaassen

NEW YORK (AdAge.com) -- John O'Hurley will be taking ballroom-dancing lessons this fall -- not as part of ABC's "Dancing With the Stars", but for fun, with his wife, Lisa. And he's far from alone. Hundreds of thousands of other Americans are signing up to Cha-Cha, spurred on by hits like "Shall We Dance?", "Mad Hot Ballroom" and, of course, "Dancing With the Stars".

"The joke I make is that I studied classically as an actor and as a singer -- what was the one thing I forgot to learn?" said Mr. O'Hurley, the runner-up on ABC's surprise summer hit, who has a book deal, a recently released album and, now that he can dance, an upcoming role on Broadway in Chicago. "This show was God's great practical joke."

If "Dancing With the Stars" was God's practical joke for Mr. O'Hurley, ABC -- and the \$500-million-a-year dance-instruction industry -- is laughing all the way to the bank.

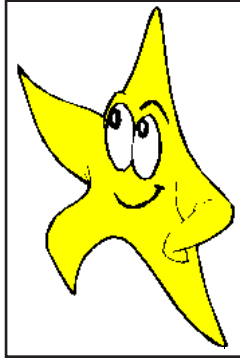
New student enrollments at Arthur Murray International's 155 U.S. franchises are up 50% this year over the same period in 2004. The Coral Gables, Fla.-based company has taught 450,000 private lessons in the first 32 weeks of the year, 20% more than last year at this time. At Fred Astaire Dance School, Web traffic is up 35%. "Business was good, but this has made it better," said John Kimmons, executive vice president of Arthur Murray.

"Dancing With the Stars" marked the most-watched summer series debut in five years -- since CBS bet on "Survivor". The 13.5 million viewers watching the June 1 premiere grew to 15.7 million by June 15 and 22.4 million by the finale July 6. And the network [reprised] the show with a dance-off, airing Sept. 20-21, thanks to controversy surrounding the outcome, in which Kelly Monaco from ABC's "General Hospital" beat Mr. O'Hurley. According to media buyers, ABC asked for about \$100,000 an ad unit early on in the shows run, tripling the price to about \$300,000 by the finale.

Still, that price is low for a blockbuster. Consider the \$750,000 Fox asked for a 30-second spot in "American Idol", which drew 26 million to 27 million. "Nobody saw 'Dancing With the Stars' coming," explained Jason Maltby, president and co-executive director of national broadcast at media agency MindShare. "By the time they saw they had a hit, there was no marketplace." ABC is bringing the show back for a second season in January.

"ABC is the new poet laureate of ballroom dancing and around that all of this stuff is coagulating", said Robert Thompson, director of Syracuse University's Center for the Study of Popular Television. "It was a trend waiting to be rediscovered in this culture of repackaging and nostalgia."

"Whenever Madison Avenue and Hollywood try to feed us something, we buy into it and believe it's good for us and something we want to do", said Ken Richards, publicity director for [USADance] national governing body for dance sports in the U.S.



Upcoming Events

A refrigerator list of Greater Fox Valley Chapter 2042's Remaining Dances for 2005
(All dances are held from 8:00 PM - 11:30 PM unless noted.)

October 15th . . . "Poodle Skirts & Soda Jerks" at the Johnsburg Community Center---East Coast Swing lesson at 8:00. Dress in your cool duds, penny loafers, poodle skirts, and blue jeans. *[I've been waiting on this dance all year....Ed.]*

November 19th . . . "Soft Lights & Rumba Nights" held at the **Barrington Banquet Hall** with a Rumba lesson at 8:00 PM. Note: this is a change of location so please make a note of it.

December 10th . . . "Snowflake Waltz" will be held at the **Barrington Banquet Hall**. The Waltz will be featured as our dance lesson at 8:00 PM. Just like November's dance, this is a change of venue. **Note also that this dance will be on the second Saturday of the month instead of our usual 3rd-Saturday schedule.**

NOTE!!



clip and save



Birthday and Anniversary wishes to the following GFV members:

October: Eileen Kendall (5th), Richard Figge (6th), George Richardson (6th), Mary Sherman (18th), Wendy Haas (29th), Charles Zunker (29th).

November: Roseann Davis (1st), Arne Jensen (6th), Carl Kendall (6th), Nancy Farrell (14th), Paul Busch (28th).

December: Alex Hawryluk (12th), Cathy Howard (14th), Jan & Walt Fink's anniversary (9th), Chrisann Andersen (15th), Guy Bedow (17th), Jan Fink (17th), Mike Rehberg (22nd), Cora Grospe (25th), Ramon Gonzalez (26th).

Jan's Reminder Corner

The Fox Tales' "self-help section".....by Jan Fink



The electronic version of the newsletter prevents me from sending along the usual pre-pasted stickers with future dance dates on them (Walt hasn't gotten quite that advanced with this electronic thingy yet) but this issue, they'll be sent out to you with your regular mailing. For those members wishing to receive their newsletter via e-mail in the future, a supply of the stickers will be available at the dances for you to pick up.

Jan

(See related story "Dancing On The Silver Screen" on page 8) 3

"Lemon Merengue II" July's "Son of 2004's Dance" is a hit

We reprised last year's popular Merengue night this month, and it was received just as well as the first time around. Good crowd on hand to enjoy the free Merengue dance lesson given by Jackie and Frank Penze, followed by open dancing and friendship until closing time.

Cheryl Gleason, Cora Grospe, and John Kudlach were winners in our door prize drawings, and in our 50/50 raffle, Bill Hadrys took home five dollars while Denise Matoska had both her lucky numbers drawn and received both the ten dollar second prize and the twenty dollar grand prize. Jim Schultz took home the Members-only prize of a rock and roll CD set, and Phyllis Trychta won the special raffle basket.

A hearty welcome to new GFV members Amy Makovec and Kevin Shear, who joined the chapter this evening, and a big thank you to Darwin and Nancy Peterson who renewed their memberships this date.



(Above) The cool and friendly confines of the Johnsburg Community Center were great relief on a hot July night.



(Left:) John Kudlach and Wendy Haas.



Dancegoers practicing and learning the barrel roll in July's Merengue dance lesson.

(Right) Darwin and Nancy Peterson enjoying a Swing number.



(Below) Sherri and Kevin Klopfenstein.



(Left) Greg and Cora Grospe.



"Hot Cha Cha" August's Latin Ballroom Affair

"Hot" was the byword, all right. Apropos for the torrid weather as well as the Latin tunes and dancing. We welcomed new members Vickie Kroll and Dale Luetscher to the chapter this evening which saw the Cha Cha featured in the free dance lesson. Darwin and Nancy Peterson kindly donated the cake for the evening's refreshments, while snacks were provided courtesy of the Covenahs, Penzes, Jim Wojdyla, Sharon Zak, and the Finks. Door prizes were taken home by Tony Kirch, Dawn Stover, and Jim Wojdyla, and in the 50/50 raffle, Rod Covenah, Nancy Peterson, and Barry Fues each garnered \$5, while Margaret Rehberg's and Amy Makovec's tickets were drawn for \$10 bills. Darwin Peterson won the members-only drawing, and the Special raffle basket was taken home by Ken and Gerry Cyzen.



Greg and Cora Grospe display their super moves and talent at all our dances. August's was no exception.



Right: Holy Ballroom, Batman! Your humble scribe and his Bride are caught actually dancing. Wojo nailed us in the act of something that looks like a Cha Cha. Or maybe a Mambo. Or...I dunno. Maybe a choke hold.



Above left: Dale Brown and Chrisann Andersen.

Above right: Margaret and Mike Rehberg.

Left: Nancy and Darwin Peterson.



Below: Steve and Trudy Johnson.



(Left) I didn't catch this couple's name; sorry.

(Below) Dale Luetscher and Vickie Kroll.



"Let's Dance Around The World" September's Beach House Ball

We sent summer out with a bang in September with a good crowd at the Crystal Lake Beach House, with the Tango as the night's featured dance---Frank and Jackie Penze instructed the Gaucho and Ladies' Rock & Fan steps. Our rolls swelled by four new members this evening; welcome aboard to Greg Frank, Mike Caldwell, Kathleen Anderson, and Don Ulibarri. Snacks were donated by the Covenahs, Penzes, and Finks, while the Chapter donated a sheet cake. Door prizes were won by Margaret Rehberg, Bill Hadrys, Steve Johnson, and Sharon Kuhl; in the 50/50 raffle, \$5 bills went home with Karen Kurth and Dale Luetscher, while former GFV member Clyde Pfeil, visiting us from Florida, won \$10. Top money-winner was John Kudlach who pocketed \$20. Vickie Kroll won the generous raffle basket, Tom Green had the lucky ticket in the Members-only drawing, and as Rod mentioned in his President's column, Richard Figge and Vickie Kroll were recipients of gift certificates for dance shoes.

I for one was glad to see this hot, dry summer leave. So was my lawn, which reached Extra Crispy status last month.



(Left) New members Kathleen Anderson and Mike Caldwell.

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Soon to be newlyweds; congratulations!



Dan and Diane Terlep



New member Greg Frank and partner



(Left) Vickie Kroll and Dale Luetscher



Right: The Grospeles wow the crowd



Below: Steve and Trudy Johnson do, too.



Right: The main Beach House's spacious floor gave us lots of room..



G F V



MEMBER PROFILE

Jim Wojdyla & Sharon Zak
Marengo / Crystal Lake, Illinois



Fox Tales: What's your occupation?

Jim- Lead Mechanic for United Airlines.

Sharon - Human Resources Specialist for Snap-On Tools.

Do you have children?

Yes---Sharon has three children---Kurt, 23, Kristie, 20, and Kyle, 18. Jim also has three children, Jimmy, 26, Justin, 24, and Jeremy, 17.

Are they also dancers?

The children are not dancers.

Where were you born and raised?

Jim - Born in Chicago, IL.

Sharon - Born in Cincinnati, Ohio.

What's Your Favorite Holiday?

Christmas.

What are your hobbies (besides dancing)?

Jim - I restore old cars and am currently working on a 1958 Corvette.

Sharon - I use my spare time to work out at the gym.

How did your interest in dancing begin?

We just thought it would be something fun to do together.

What are your favorite dances?

We both enjoy the Cha Cha and Swing.

Are there any types of dancing you'd like to try?

We'd really like to learn more steps to the dances we already know.

What are your favorite types of music?

Nothing special, really---we enjoy a wide variety..

Who are your favorite recording artists?

Don't have any ones which really stand out.

Dance Tips - Leading and Following

Source: Dancing With Rene Z. (www.renez.com)

Leading - Smooth Dances:

The most important part of leading is probably body language. If your partner is attuned to you, if she listens to your body language, she can detect very slight changes in motion and direction and can react in ample time. You can consciously emphasize your body language when needed, such as when you lift your shoulder before you prepare to sway.

Leading isn't something you turn on and off. When you drive a car on a straight road, you still keep your hands on the steering wheel and make small corrections when required. The same applies to the control the leader has to assume when dancing. It's always present but only used when needed

First, get into the proper position. Look over your partner's right shoulder and try to have your partner look over your right shoulder. Your right pelvic bone should be inside your partner's right pelvic bone. This lines up your shoulders parallel to your partner's, which is the best position to move backward and forward.

Don't "pop the clutch" by starting with a sudden abrupt motion. Telegraph your intention smoothly.

A strong lead doesn't mean applying a lot of force. It's a matter of firm, continuous and steady control.

Your two hands should form a cradle, as if you were holding a baby, with your left hand under its head and the right hand under its behind. No matter where and how you move, make sure the baby stays in the same position. Don't squeeze its head and don't crush it against you with your right.

This means don't squeeze your partner's hand with your left, don't pull her toward you with your right. The only exception might be to counteract the centrifugal force of a fast pivot, where it might help to pull your partner into you a little more firmly with your right hand.

There are many ways to signal your partner what to do next. It all depends on the dance variation you're trying to execute.

Following - Smooth Dances

In close position, always look over your partner's right shoulder. Your right pelvic bone should be inside your partner's right pelvic bone. This lines up your shoulders parallel to your partner's. Many ladies have a tendency to keep their right shoulder farther away than their left shoulder. Similarly, men have a tendency to push their partner away with their left hand or pull them too close with their right, with a similar effect. This makes it much harder to move and to lead.

Keep your left arm firm; don't let it flex. This provides you with a tactile feedback of your partner's movements. Whether he moves forward or backward, you'll always keep the same distance from him.

After a promenade movement, quickly return to a close position and look over his shoulder again. This lines you up for the next move.

Stay close to your partner and maintain body contact. You'll feel the direction of his body movements and will be able to react more easily. Relax, don't be pro-active, don't try to anticipate the next lead. Don't be too brittle or strident in your movements; become more languid, letting the man guide you along (don't fall asleep, though). Try occasionally closing your eyes and concentrate mentally on your partner's body movement and his hand, shoulder, and head leads.

The only exception is when your partner is about to collide with another couple while moving backward. Warn him with a tap on the shoulder, or even pull him into a halt. he'll thank you.

Be forgiving. Your partner has a lot to think about. He has to plan the next step, lead you into it, and at the same time navigate on an often crowded dance floor. If he's like me, doing more than one thing at a time is a challenge.

Midwest Ballroom Oct/Nov Schedule



Midwest Ballroom is the only Chicago area radio program which features the local big bands. Each program includes a local guest artist or orchestra, as well as music selections by other area dance bands. The show airs Saturdays at 5 P.M. over WDCB 90.9 FM, public radio from College of DuPage. For the past five years, John Russell Ghrist has been the volunteer program host. The station can also be heard worldwide on the Internet at www.wdcb.org. Listeners may contact the show at P.O. Box 1073 Dundee, IL 60118, or at midwestballroom@yahoo.com.

October 15 - Yorkville American Legion Big Band. Bandleader Rick Falato is a former northwest suburban Dempster Junior High School band director. The band hosts dances on the third Sunday of each month at the Yorkville American Legion, Routes 34 and 47 in Yorkville, IL. Dance lessons begin at 5 PM, followed by dancing from 6-9 PM. Highlights of the band's appearance at this past summer's Schaumburg Library Concerts will be presented. The band can be reached at 630-553-0153. The band's singers are Leslie Beukelman and Dean Potter.

October 22 - Steve Cooper Orchestra.. Steve Cooper's vibrant trumpet playing adds spice to this all-around band that performs ballroom and Dixieland style music. The orchestra performs often at area ballrooms, and has recorded several albums. Highlights of the orchestra's last summer concert at the Schaumburg Township District Library will be presented. The band's singer is Mary Kafas.

October 29 - Limited Edition Big Band. Dick Gulbrandsen leads this high energy orchestra that plays a variety of big band standards and jazz tunes. The band has recorded several CD's and plays often at area events including the Naperville Rib Fest. Highlights of this past summer's concert at the Schaumburg Library will be presented. The band is also going on jazz cruise this winter. Julie Creighton is the band's vocalist.

November 5 - Brotherhood of Harmony Barbershop Quartet-Tom Toftey leads this talented group that will be performing for a free concert at the Schaumburg Library on November 10, at 7pm. The history of barbershop music will be discussed and tunes by the quartet will be played. Selections by area big bands will also be presented on the show.

November 12 - Keeth Barrie - Canadian born baritone Keeth Barrie is featured on songs along with information about his life. He passed away in 2004, but his music lives on through his many recordings. He wrote most of his own music which reminds people of the "good old days." Barrie's rich voice is often compared to Perry Como or Roger Whittaker.

November 19 - All Aboard for Railroad Songs! Matt Puralewski of the "Pullman Conductors of Jazz," co-hosts an hour of train songs, and railroad history featuring his group and other area bands.

November 26 - Vito Buffalo Orchestra is featured on a special segment of "summer sounds," recalling the great times that his and other area bands performed at outdoor events this past year. Vito Buffalo has recorded several fine CD's and appeared at the Schaumburg Library Concert Series this past summer. Other bands will be featured on the show.

USADANCE CHAPTER 2039 NEWS

USADance Chapter 2039 in Rockford holds its "4th Saturday" dances at the Belvidere Community Center, 111 W. First St. in Belvidere. Their next dance there will be October 22nd, with a group lesson from 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM, followed by open dancing until 11:00 PM. Future dances will be held Nov. 26th and Dec. 17th. For information, call (815) 633-7979.

The chapter also hosts their "2nd Friday" dances at Memorial Hall, 211 North Main St., in Rockford, from 7:30 PM - 10:30 PM. Dance dates for this venue are October 14th and November 11th. (No dance in December).

Admission to this chapter's dances is \$5.00 per member, \$7.00 per non-member, and \$2.00 for students; all are conducted smoke-free and alcohol-free.

DANCING ON THE SILVER SCREEN (AND SMALL SCREEN TOO).

Ballroom Boot Camp

Where & When: The Learning Channel
Fridays - 10 pm ET/9:00 PM Central Time
Started October 7th - Will air for 10 weeks



John Davis, Asst. RVP Southeast Region advised he had confirmed with the Production Manager that Ballroom Boot Camp will air for ten weeks at 10 pm on Fridays starting October 7th on The Learning Channel. They have been filming at several pro-am comps, and were wrapping up the end of August at The Embassy Ballroom Championships.

The 2004 movie "Shall We Dance?" starring Richard Gere and Jennifer Lopez, and this summer's indie hit documentary Mad Hot Ballroom were the first indications of the potential for this kind of programming. This summer, Fox rushed out its "American Idol" spinoff, "So You Think You Can Dance". In October, Discovery Networks TLC [premiered] "Ballroom Boot Camp", a reality competition that takes average Joes and turns them into star dancers under the tutelage of professionals, and in February 2006, New Line Cinema will release "Take the Lead", which stars Antonio Banderas as Pierre Dulaine, a dance instructor in Mad Hot Ballroom. Heck, even Patrick Swayze, the original Dirty Dancer, last week premiered "One Last Dance", which is being released on DVD.

USADance-Sponsored Dance Cruise



9 days - Mexican Rivera
Embarking: January 28th, 2006
Norwegian Star
\$1000 - \$1500 plus airfare
Contact: Mary or Ginny at (800) 299-1537
Info: Jim McCown at (360) 459-5469